Honoré De Balzac In Twenty-five Volumes

Pierrette. The Abbé Birotteau. A Bachelor's Establishment

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

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THE WIDOW DESCOINGS

Balzac, vol. six—Frontis

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

IN TWENTY-FIVE VOLUMES

The First Complete Translation into English

PIERRETTE
THE ABBE BIROTTEAU
A BACHELOR'S ESTABLISHMEMT

Volume Six

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS ON THE WOOD
BY FAMOUS FRENCH ARTISTS

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Preface	7
Pierrette	11
The Abbe Birotteau	161
Preface	235
A Bachelor's Establishment	241

PIERRETTE

PREFACE

"Les Célibataires," the longest number of the original "Comédie" under a single title, next to "Illusions Perdues," is not, like that book, connected by any unity of story. Indeed, the general bond of union is pretty weak; and though it is quite true that bachelors and old maids are the heroes and heroines of all three, it would be rather hard to establish any other bond of connection, and it is rather unlikely that any one unprompted would fix on this as a sufficient ground of partnership.

Two at least of the component parts, however, are of very high excellence. I do not myself think that "Pierrette," which opens the series, is quite the equal of its companions. Written, as it was, for Countess Anna de Hanska, Balzac's stepdaughter of the future, while she was still very young, it partakes necessarily of the rather elaborate artificiality of all attempts to suit the young person, of French attempts in particular, and it may perhaps be said of Balzac's attempts most of all. It belongs, in a way, to the Arcis series —the series which also includes the fine "Ténébreuse Affaire" and the unfinished "Député d'Arcis"—but is not very closely connected therewith. The picture of the actual "Célibataires," the brother and sister Rogron, with which it opens, is in one of Balzac's best-known styles, and is executed with all his usual mastery both of the minute and of the at least partially repulsive, showing also that strange knowledge of the *bourgeois de Paris* which, somehow or other, he seems to have attained by dint of unknown forgatherings in his ten years of apprenticeship. But when we come to "Pierrette" herself, the story is, I think, rather less satisfying. Her persecutions and her end, and the devotion of the faithful Brigaut and the rest, are pathetic no doubt, but tend (I hope

it is not heartless to say it) just a very little toward *sensiblerie*. The fact is that the thing is not quite in Balzac's line.

The other and shorter constituent of the book, "The Abbé Birotteau," is certainly on a higher level, and has attracted the most magnificent eulogies from some of the novelist's admirers. I think both Mr. Henry James and Mr. Wedmore have singled out this little piece for detailed and elaborate praise, and there is no doubt that it is a happy example of a kind in which the author excelled. The opening, with its evident but not obtruded remembrance of the old and well-founded superstition—derived from the universal belief in some form of Nemesis—that an extraordinary sense of happiness, good luck, or anything of the kind, is a precursor of misfortune, and calls for some instant act of sacrifice or humiliation, is very striking; and the working out of the vengeance of the goddess by the very ungoddess-like though feminine hand of Mademoiselle Gamard has much that is commendable. Nothing in its well exampled kind is better touched off than the Listomère coterie, from the shrewdness of Monsieur de Bourbonne to the selfishness of Madame de Listomère. I do not know that the old maid herself—cat, and far worse than cat as she is—is at all exaggerated, and the sketch of the coveted *appartement* and its ill-fated *mobilier* is about as good as it can be. And the battle between Madame de Listomère and the Abbé Troubert, which has served as a model for many similar things, has, if it has often been equalled, not often been surpassed.

I cannot, however, help thinking that there is more than a little exaggeration in more than one point of the story. The Abbé Birotteau is surely a little too much of a fool; the Abbé Troubert an Iago a little too much wanting in verisimilitude; and the central incident of the clause about the furniture too manifestly improbable. Taking the first and the last points together, is it likely that any one not quite an idiot should, in the first place, remain so entirely ignorant of the value of his property; should, in the second, though, ignorant or not, he attached the greatest possible *pretium*

affectionis to it, contract to resign it for such a ridiculous consideration; and should, in the third, take the fatal step without so much as remembering the condition attached thereto? If it be answered that Birotteau *was* idiot enough to do such a thing, then it must be observed further that one's sympathy is frozen by the fact. Such a man deserved such treatment. And, again, even if French justice was, and perhaps is, as much influenced by secret considerations as Balzac loves to represent it, we must agree with that member of the Listomère society who pointed out that no tribunal could possibly uphold such an obviously iniquitous bargain. As for Troubert, the idea of the Jesuitical ecclesiastic (though Balzac was not personally hostile to the Jesuits) was a common one at the time, and no doubt popular, but the actual personage seems to me nearer to Eugène Sue's Rodin in some ways than I could have desired.

These things, however, are very much a case of "As You Like It" or "As It Strikes You," and I have said that "The Abbé Birotteau" strikes some good judges as of exceptional merit, while no one can refuse it merit in a high degree. I should not, except for the opening, place it in the very highest class of the "Comédie," but it is high beyond all doubt in the second.

"Pierrette," which was earlier called "Pierrette Lorrain," was issued in 1840, first in the "Siècle," and then in volume form, published by Souverain. In both issues it had nine chapter or book divisions with headings. With the other "Célibataires" it entered the "Comédie" as a "Scène de la Vie de Province" in 1843.

The "Abbé Birotteau" (which Balzac had at one time intended to call by the name of the Curé's enemy, and which at first was simply called by the general title "Les Célibataires") is much older than its companions, and appeared in 1832 in the "Scènes de la Vie Privée." It was soon properly shifted to the "Vie de Province," and as such in due time joined the "Comédie" bearing the title of "Le Curé de Tours."

TO MADEMOISELLE ANNA DE HANSKA

DEAR CHILD—You, the joy of a whole house, you, whose white or rose-colored cape flutters in the summer like a will-o'-the-wisp through the arbors of Wierzchownia, followed by the wistful eyes of your father and mother—how can I dedicate to you a tale full of sadness? But is it not well to tell you of sorrows such as a girl so fondly loved as you are will never know? For some day your fair hands may take them comfort. It is so difficult, Anna, to find in the picture of our manners any incident worthy to meet your eye, that an author has no choice; but perhaps you may discern how happy you are from reading this tale, sent by

Your old friend,

DE BALZAC.

PIERRETTE

IN OCTOBER, 1827, at break of day, a youth of about sixteen, whose dress proclaimed him to be what modern phraseology insolently calls a proletarian, was standing on a little square in the lower part of the town of Provins. At this early hour he could, without being observed, study the various houses set round the Place in an oblong square. The mills on the streams of Provins were already at work. Their noise, repeated by the echoes from the upper town, and harmonizing with the sharp air and the clear freshness of the morning, bewrayed the perfect silence —so complete that the clatter of a diligence was audible, still a league away on the highroad.

The two longer rows of houses, divided by an arched avenue of lime-trees, are artless in style, confessing the peaceful and circumscribed life of the townsfolk. In this part of the town there are no signs of trade. At that time there was hardly a carriage-gate suggesting the luxury of the rich—or if there were, it rarely turned on its hinges—excepting that of Monsieur Martener, a doctor who was obliged to keep and use a cab. Some of the fronts were graced by a long vine stem, others with climbing roses growing up to the first floor, and scenting the windows with their large scattered bunches of flowers. One end of this Square almost joins the High Street of the lower town; the other end is shut in by a street parallel with the High Street, and the gardens beyond run down to one of the two rivers that water the valley of Provins.

At this end, the quietest part of the Place, the young

workman recognized the house that had been described to him—a front of white stone, scored with seams to represent joins in the masonry, and windows with light iron balconies, decorated with rosettes painted yellow, and closed with gray Venetian shutters. Above this front—a ground floor and a first floor only—three attic windows pierce a slate-roof, and on one of the gables twirls a brand-new weather-cock. This modern weather-cock represents a sportsman aiming at a hare. The front door is reached up three stone steps. On one side of the door an end of leaden pipe spouts dirty water into a little gutter, revealing the kitchen; on the other, two windows, carefully guarded by gray wooden shutters in which heart-shaped holes are cut to admit a little light, seemed to our youth to be those of the dining-room. In the basement secured by the three steps, under each window is an air-opening into the cellars, closed by painted iron shutters pierced with holes in a pattern. Everything was then quite new. An observer, looking at this house freshly repaired, its still raw splendor contrasting with the antique aspect of all the rest, would at once have seen in it the mean ideas and perfect contentment of a retired tradesman.

The young fellow gazed at every detail with an expression of pleasure mingled with sadness; his eyes wandered from the kitchen to the garret with a look that denoted meditation. The pink gleams of sunshine showed in one of the attic windows a cotton curtain which was wanting to the others. Then the lad's face brightened completely; he withdrew a few steps, leaned his back against a lime-tree, and sang, in the drawling tones peculiar to the natives of the West, this ballad of Brittany, published by Bruguière, a composer to whom we owe some charming airs. In Brittany the young swains of the villages sing this song to newly married couples on their wedding-day—

"We come to wish you every happiness,
To th' maister at your side,
As well as to the bride.

"You, mistress bride, are bound for life and death,
With a bright golden chain,
That none may break in twain.

"Now you to fairs and junkets go no more;
Nay, you must stay at home,
While we may dance and roam.

"And do you know how trusty you must be,
And faithful to your mate,
To love him rathe and late?

"Then take this posy I have made for you.
Alack! for happy hours
Must perish like these flowers."

This national air, as sweet as that arranged by Chateaubriand to the words *Ma sœur, te souvient-il encore?* sung in a little town of la Brie in Champagne, could not fail to arouse irresistible memories in a native of Brittany, so faithfully does it paint the manners, the simplicity, the scenery of that noble old province. There is in it an intangible melancholy, caused by the realities of life, which is deeply touching. And is not this power to awaken a whole world of grave, sweet, sad things by a familiar and often cheerful strain characteristic of those popular airs which are the superstitions of music, if we accept the word superstition as meaning what remains from the ruin of nations, the flotsam left by revolutions?

As he ended the first verse, the workman, who never took his eyes off the curtain in the attic, saw no one astir. While he was singing the second, it moved a little. As he sang the words, "Take this posy," a young girl's face was seen. A fair hand cautiously opened the window, and the girl nodded to the wanderer as he ended with the melancholy reflection contained in the last two lines—

"Alack! for happy hours
Must perish like these flowers."

The lad suddenly took from under his jacket, and held up to her, a golden-yellow spray of a flower very common in Brittany, which he had picked no doubt in a field in la Brie, where it is somewhat rare—the flower of the furze.

"Why, is it you, Brigaut?" said the girl in a low voice.

"Yes, Pierrette, yes. I am living in Paris; I am walking about France; but I might settle down here, since you are here."

At this moment the window-fastening of the room on the first floor, below Pierrette's, was heard to creak. The girl showed the greatest alarm, and said to Brigaut, "Fly!"

The young fellow jumped like a frog to a bend in the street, round a mill, before entering the wider street that is the artery of the lower town; but in spite of his agility, his hobnailed shoes, ringing on the paving-cobbles of Provins, made a noise easily distinguished from the music of the mill, and heard by the individual who opened the window.

This person was a woman. No man ever tears himself from the delights of his morning slumbers to listen to a minstrel in a round jacket. None but a maid is roused by a love song. And this was a maid—and an old maid. When she had thrown open her shutters with the action of a bat, she looked about her on all sides, and faintly heard Brigaut's steps as he made his escape. Is there on earth anything more hideous than the matutinal apparition of an ugly old maid at her window? Of all the grotesque spectacles that are the amusement of travellers as they go through little towns, is it not the most unpleasing? It is too depressing, too repulsive to be laughed at.

This particular old maid, whose ear was so keen, appeared bereft of the artifices of all kinds that she used to improve herself; she had no front of false hair, and no collar. Her headgear was the frightful little caul of black sarsnet which old women draw over their skull, showing beyond her nightcap, which had been pushed aside in her sleep. This untidiness gave her head the sinister appearance ascribed by painters to witches. The temples, ears, and nape, scarcely concealed, betrayed their withered leanness, the coarse wrinkles were conspicuous for a redness that did not charm the eye, and that was thrown into relief

by the comparative whiteness of a bed-gown tied at the throat with twisted tapes. The gaps where this bed-gown fell open revealed a chest like that of some old peasant woman careless of her ugliness. The fleshless arm might have been a stick covered with stuff. Seen at the window, the lady appeared tall by reason of the strength and breadth of her face, which reminded the spectator of the extravagant size of some Swiss countenances. The chief characteristic of the features, which presented a singular lack of harmony, was a hardness of line, a harshness of coloring, and a lack of feeling in the expression which would have filled a physiognomist with disgust. These peculiarities, visible now, were habitually modified by a sort of business smile, and a vulgar stupidity which aped good nature so successfully that the people among whom she lived might easily have supposed her to be a kind woman.

She and her brother shared the ownership of this house. The brother was sleeping so soundly in his room that the Opera-house orchestra would not have roused him; and the power of that orchestra is famous! The old maid put her head out of the window, and raised her eyes to that of the attic—eyes of a cold pale blue, with short lashes set in lids that were almost always swollen. She tried to see Pierrette; but recognizing the futility of the attempt, she withdrew into her room with a movement not unlike that of a tortoise hiding its head after putting it out of its shell. The shutters were closed again, and the silence of the Square was no more disturbed but by peasants coming into the town, or early risers. When there is an old maid in the house a watch-dog is not needed; not the smallest event occurs without her seeing it, commenting on it, and deducing every possible consequence. Thus this incident was destined to give rise to serious inferences, and to be the opening of one of those obscure dramas which are played out in the family, but which are none the less terrible for being unseen—if indeed the name of drama may be applied to this tragedy of home-life.

Pierrette did not get into bed again. To her Brigaut's arrival was an event of immense importance. During the night—the Eden of the wretched—she escaped from the annoyances and fault-finding she had to endure all day. Like the hero of some German or Russian ballad, to her sleep seemed a happy life and the day a bad dream. This morning, for the first time in three years, she had had a happy waking. The memories of infancy had sweetly sung their poetry to her soul. She had heard the first verse in her dreams; the second had roused her with a start; at the third she had doubted—the unfortunate are of the school of Saint Thomas; at the fourth verse, standing at her window, barefoot, and in her shift, she had recognized Brigaut, the friend of her childhood.

Yes, that was indeed the short square jacket with quaint little tails and pockets swinging just over the hips, the classical blue-cloth jacket of the Breton; the waistcoat of coarse knit, the linen shirt buttoned with a golden heart, the wide-rolled collar, the earrings, heavy shoes, trousers of blue drill, mottled in streaks of lighter shades; in short, all the humble and durable items of a poor Breton's costume. The large white horn buttons of the jacket and waistcoat had set Pierrette's heart beating. At the sight of the branch of furze the tears had started to her eyes; then a spasm of terror clutched her heart, crushing the flowers of remembrance that had blossomed for a moment. It struck her that her cousin might have heard her rise and go to the window. She knew the old woman, and made the signal of alarm to Brigaut, which the poor boy had hastened to obey without understanding it. Does not this instinctive obedience betray one of those innocent and mastering affections such as are to be seen once in an age on this earth, where they bloom, like the aloe-trees on Isola Bella, but two or three times in a century. Any one seeing Brigaut fly would have admired the artless heroism of a most artless love.

Jacques Brigaut was worthy of Pierrette Lorrain, who was now nearly fourteen—two children! Pierrette could

not help weeping as she saw him take to his heels with the terror inspired by her warning gesture.

She then sat down in a rickety armchair, in front of a looking-glass above a little table. On this she set her elbows, and remained pensive for an hour, trying to recall the Marais, the hamlet of Pen-Hoël, the adventurous voyages on a pond in a boat untied from an old willow-tree by little Jacques; then the old faces—her grandmother and grandfather, her mother's look of suffering, and General Brigaut's handsome head; a whole childhood of careless joy! And this again was a dream—the lights of happiness against a gray background.

She had fine light-brown hair, all in disorder, under a little nightcap tumbled in her sleep, a little cambric cap with frills that she herself had made. On each side curls fell over her temples, escaping from their gray papers. At the back of her head a thick plait hung down to her shoulders. The excessive pallor of her face showed that she was a victim to a girlish ailment to which medical science gives the pretty name of chlorosis, which robs the blood of its natural hue, disturbing the appetite, and betraying much disorderment of the whole system. This waxen hue was apparent in all the flesh-tints. The whiteness of her neck and shoulders, the colorlessness of an etiolated plant, accounted for the thinness of her arms crossed in front of her. Pierrette's feet even looked weak and shrunken by disease; her shift, falling only to her calf, showed the relaxed sinews, blue veins, and bloodless muscles. As the cold air chilled her, her lips turned purple. The mournful smile that parted her fairly delicate mouth showed teeth of ivory whiteness, even and small, pretty transparent teeth, in harmony with well-shaped ears and a nose that was elegant, if a little sharp; her face, though perfectly round, was very sweet. All the life of this charming countenance lay in the eyes; the iris, of a bright snuff-brown mottled with black, shone with golden lights round a deep bright retina. Pierrette ought to have been gay; she was sad. Her vanished gay-

ety lingered in the vivid modelling of her eyes, in the ingenuous form of her brow, and the molding of her short chin. The long eyelashes lay like brushes on the cheeks worn by debility; the whiteness, too lavishly diffused, gave great purity to the lines and features of her countenance. The ear was a little masterpiece of modelling; it might have been of marble.

Pierrette suffered in many ways. Perhaps you would like to have her story? Here it is.

Pierrette's mother was a Demoiselle Auffray of Provins, half-sister to Madame Rogron, the mother of the present owners of this house. Monsieur Auffray, after marrying for the first time at the age of eighteen, took a second wife at the age of sixty-nine. The child of his first marriage was an only daughter, ugly enough, who, when she was sixteen, married an innkeeper of Provins named Rogron. By his second marriage old Auffray had another daughter, but she was very pretty. Thus the quaint result was an enormous difference in age between Monsieur Auffray's two daughters. The child of his first wife was fifty when the second was born. By the time her father gave her a sister, Madame Rogron had two children of her own, both of full age.

The uxorious old man's younger child was married for love, at eighteen, to a Breton officer named Lorrain, a captain in the Imperial Guard. Love often begets ambition. The captain, eager to get his colonelcy, exchanged into the line. While the Major and his wife, comfortable enough with the allowance given them by Monsieur and Madame Auffray, were living handsomely in Paris, or running about Germany as the Emperor's wars or truces might guide them, old Auffray, a retired grocer at Provins, died suddenly, before he had time to make his will. The good man's estate was so cleverly manipulated by the innkeeper and his wife that they absorbed the larger part of it, leaving to old Auffray's widow no more than the house in the little Square and a few acres of land. This widow, little Madame Lorrain's mother, was but eight-and-thirty when her husband

died. Like many other widows, she had an unwholesome wish to marry again. She sold to her stepdaughter, old Madame Rogron, the land and house she had inherited under her marriage settlement, to marry a young doctor named Néraud, who ran through her fortune, and she died of grief in great poverty two years afterward.

Thus Madame Lorrain's share of the Auffray property had in great part disappeared, being reduced to about eight thousand francs.

Major Lorrain died on the field of honor at Montereau, leaving his widow, then one-and-twenty, burdened with a little girl fourteen months old, and with no fortune but the pension she could claim from Government, and whatever money might come to her from Monsieur and Madame Lorrain, tradespeople at Pen-Hoël, a town of la Vendée, in the district known as le Marais. These Lorrains, the parents of the deceased officer, and Pierrette's paternal grandfather and grandmother, sold building-timber, slates, tiles, cornices, pipes, and the like. Their business was a poor one, either from their incapacity or from ill luck, and brought them in a bare living. The failure of the great house of Colinet at Nantes, brought about by the events of 1814, which caused a sudden fall in the price of colonial produce, resulted in a loss to them of eighty thousand francs they had placed on deposit. Their daughter-in-law was therefore warmly received; the Major's widow brought with her a pension of eight hundred francs, an enormous sum at Pen-Hoël. When her half-sister and brother-in-law Rogron sent her the eight thousand francs due to her, after endless formalities, prolonged by distance, she placed the money in the Lorrains' hands, taking a mortgage, however, on a little house they owned at Nantes, let for a hundred crowns a year, and worth, perhaps, ten thousand francs.

Young Madame Lorrain died there after her mother's second and luckless marriage, in 1819, and almost at the same time as her mother. This daughter of the old man and his young wife was small, fragile, and delicate; the

damp air of the Marais did not agree with her. Her husband's family, eager to keep her there, persuaded her that nowhere else in the world would she find a place healthier or pleasanter than the Marais, the scene of Charette's exploits. She was so well taken care of, nursed, and coaxed, that her death brought honor to the Lorrains.

Some persons asserted that Brigaut, an old Vendéen, one of those men of iron who served under Charette, Mercier, the Marquis de Montauran, and the Baron du Guénic in the wars against the Republic, counted for much in young Madame Lorrain's submission. If this were so, it was certainly for the sake of a most loving and devoted soul. And, indeed, all Pen-Hoël could see that Brigaut, respectfully designated as the Major—having held that rank in the Royalist army—spent his days and his evenings in the Lorrains' sitting-room by the side of the Emperor's Major's widow. Toward the end, the curé of Pen-Hoël allowed himself to speak of this matter to old Madame Lorrain; he begged her to persuade her daughter-in-law to marry Brigaut, promising to get him an appointment as justice of the peace to the district of Pen-Hoël, by the intervention of the Vicomte de Kergarouët. But the poor woman's death made the scheme useless.

Pierrette remained with her grandparents, who owed her four hundred francs a year, naturally spent on her maintenance. The old people, now less and less fit for business, had an active and pushing rival in trade, whom they could only abuse, without doing anything to protect themselves. The Major, their friend and adviser, died six months after young Madame Lorrain, perhaps of grief, or perhaps of his wounds; he had had seven-and-twenty. Their bad neighbor, as a good man of business, now aimed at ruining his rivals, so as to extinguish all competition. He got the Lorrains to borrow on their note of hand, foreseeing that they could never pay, and so forced them, in their old age, to become bankrupt. Pierrette's mortgage was second to a mortgage held by her grandmother, who clung to her rights to secure a

morsel of bread for her husband. The house at Nantes was sold for nine thousand five hundred francs, and the costs came to fifteen hundred francs. The remaining eight thousand francs came to Madame Lorrain, who invested them in a mortgage in order to live at Nantes in a sort of almshouse, like that of Sainte-Périne in Paris, called Saint-Jacques, where the two old people found food and lodging at a very moderate rate.

As it was impossible that they should take with them their little destitute grandchild, the old Lorrains bethought them of her uncle and aunt Rogron, to whom they wrote. The Rogrons of Provins were dead. Thus the letter from the Lorrains to the Rogrons would seem to be lost. But if there is anything here below which can take the place of Providence, is it not the General Post Office? The genius of the Post, immeasurably superior to that of the Public, outdoes in inventiveness the imagination of the most brilliant novelist. As soon as the Post has charge of a letter, worth, on delivery, from three to ten sous, if it fails at once to find him or her to whom it should be delivered, it displays a mercenary solicitude which has no parallel but in the boldest duns. The Post comes, goes, hunts through the eighty-six departments. Difficulties incite the genius of its officials, who, not infrequently, are men of letters, and who then throw themselves into the pursuit with the ardor of the mathematicians at the National Observatory; they rummage the kingdom. At the faintest gleam of hope the Paris offices are on the alert again. You often sit amazed as you inspect the scrawls that meander over the letter, back and front—the glorious evidence of the administrative perseverance that animates the Post Office. If a man were to undertake what the Post has accomplished, he would have spent ten thousand francs in travelling, in time and in money, to recover twelve sous. The Post certainly has more intelligence than it conveys.

The letter written by the Lorrains to Monsieur Rogron, who had been dead a year, was transmitted by the Post to

Monsieur Rogron, his son, a haberdasher in the Rue Saint-Denis, Paris. This is where the genius of the Post Office shines. An heir is always more or less puzzled to know whether he has really scraped up the whole of his inheritance, whether he has not forgotten some debt or some fragments. The Revenue guesses everything; it even reads character. A letter addressed to old Rogron of Provins was bound to pique the curiosity of Rogron, *junior*, of Paris, or of Mademoiselle Rogron, his heirs. So the Revenue earned its sixty centimes.

The Rogrons, toward whom the Lorrains held out beseeching hands, though they were in despair at having to part from their granddaughter, thus became the arbiters of Pierrette Lorraine's fate. It is indispensable, therefore, to give some account of their antecedents and their character.

Old Rogron, the innkeeper at Provins, on whom old Auffray had bestowed the child of his first marriage, was hot-faced, with a purple-veined nose, and cheeks which Bacchus had overlaid with his crimson and bulbous blossoms. Though stout, short, and pot-bellied, with stumpy legs and heavy hands, he had all the shrewdness of the Swiss innkeeper, resembling that race. His face remotely suggested a vast hail-stricken vineyard. Certainly he was not handsome; but his wife was like him. Never were a better matched couple. Rogron liked good living and to have pretty girls to wait on him. He was one of the sect of Egoists whose ways are brutal, and who give themselves up to their vices and do their will in the face of Israel. Greedy, mercenary, and by no means refined, obliged to be the purveyor to his own fancies, he ate up all he earned till his teeth failed him. Then avarice remained. In his old age he sold his inn, collected, as we have seen, all his father-in-law's leavings, and retired to the little house in the Square, which he bought for a piece of bread of old Auffray's widow, Pierrette's grandmother.

Rogron and his wife owned about two thousand francs a year, derived from the letting of twenty-seven plots of land

in the neighborhood of Provins, and the interest on the price of their inn, which they had sold for twenty thousand francs. Old Auffray's house, though in a very bad state, was used as it was for a dwelling by the innkeepers, who avoided repairing it as they would have shunned the plague; old rats love cracks and ruins. The retired publican, taking a fancy for gardening, spent his savings in adding to his garden; he extended it to the bank of the river, making a long square shut in by two walls, and ending with a stone embankment, below which the water-plants, left to run wild, displayed their abundant flowers.

Early in their married life the Rogron couple had a son and a daughter, with two years between them; everything degenerates; their children were hideous. Put out to nurse in the country as cheaply as possible, these unhappy little ones came home with the wretched training of village life, having cried long and often for their foster-mother, who went to work in the fields, and who left them meanwhile shut up in one of the dark, damp, low rooms which form the dwelling of the French peasant. By this process the children's features grew thick, and their voices harsh; they were far from flattering their mother's vanity, and she tried to correct them of their bad habits by a severity which, by comparison with their father's, seemed tenderness itself. They were left to play in the yards, stables, and outhouses of the inn, or to run about the town; they were sometimes whipped; sometimes they were sent to their grandfather Auffray, who loved them little. This injustice was one of the reasons that encouraged the Rogrons to secure a large share of the "old rascal's" leavings. Meanwhile, however, Rogron sent his boy to school; and he paid a man, one of his carters, to save the lad from the conscription. As soon as his daughter Sylvie was twelve years old, he sent her to Paris as an apprentice in a house of business. Two years later, his son Jérôme-Denis was packed off by the same road. When his friends the carriers, who were his allies, or the inn customers asked him what he meant to do with his children,

old Rogron explained his plans with a brevity which had this advantage over the statements of most fathers, that it was frank—

"When they are of an age to understand me, I shall just give them a kick you know where, saying, 'Be off and make your fortune,'" he would reply, as he drank, or wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. Then looking at the inquirer with a knowing wink, "Ha, ha!" he would add, "they are not greater fools than I am. My father gave me three kicks, I shall give them but one. He put a louis into my hand, I will give them ten; so they will be better off than I was.—That's the right way. And after I am gone, what is left will be left; the notaries will find them fast enough. A pretty joke, indeed, if I am to keep myself short for the children's sake! They owe their being to me; I have brought them up; I ask nothing of them; they have not paid me back, heh, neighbor? I began life as a carter, and that did not hinder me from marrying that old rascal Auffray's daughter."

Sylvie was placed as an apprentice, with a premium of a hundred crowns for her board, with some tradespeople in the Rue Saint-Denis, natives of Provins. Two years later she was paying her way; though she earned no money, her parents had nothing to pay for her food and lodging. This, in the Rue Saint-Denis, is called being "at par." Two years later Sylvie was earning a hundred crowns a year. In the course of that time her mother had sent her a hundred francs for pocket-money. Thus, at the age of nineteen, Mademoiselle Sylvie Rogron was independent. When she was twenty, she was second "young lady" in the house of Julliard, raw-silk merchants, at the sign of the *Ver chinois* (or Silkworm), in the Rue Saint-Denis.

The history of the brother was like the sister's. Little Jérôme-Denis Rogron was placed with one of the largest wholesale mercers in the Rue Saint-Denis, the maison Guépin at the Trois Quenouilles. While Sylvie, at twenty-one, was forewoman with a thousand francs a year, Jérôme-Denis, better served by luck, was, at eighteen, head shop-clerk, earning

twelve hundred, with the Guépins, also natives of Provins. The brother and sister met every Sunday and holiday, and spent the day in cheap amusements. They dined outside Paris; they went to Saint-Cloud, Meudon, Belleville, or Vincennes.

At the end of 1815 they united the money they had earned by the sweat of their brow, and bought of Madame Guénée the business and goodwill of a famous house, the "Sœur de famille," one of the best known retail haberdashers. The sister kept the cash, the shop, and the accounts; the brother was both buyer and head clerk, as Sylvie was for some time her own forewoman. In 1821, after five years' hard work, competition had become so lively in the haberdashery business that the brother and sister had scarcely been able to pay off the purchase-money and keep up the reputation of the house.

Though Sylvie Rogron was at this time but forty, her ugliness, her constant toil, and a peculiarly crabbed expression, arising as much from the shape of her features as from her anxieties, made her look like a woman of fifty. Jérôme-Denis Rogron, at the age of thirty-eight, had the most idiotic face that ever bent over a counter to a customer. His low forehead, crushed by fatigue, was seamed by three arid furrows. His scanty gray hair, cut very short, suggested the unutterable stupidity of a cold-blooded animal; in the gaze of his blue-gray eyes there was neither fire nor mind. His round, flat face aroused no sympathy, and did not even bring a smile to the lips of those who study the varieties of Parisian physiognomy; it was depressing. And while, like his father, he was short and thick, his shape, not having the coarse obesity of the innkeeper, showed in every detail an absurd flabbiness. His father's excessive redness gave place in him to the flaccid lividness acquired by people who live in airless backshops, in the barred coops that serve as counting-houses, always folding and unfolding skeins of thread, paying or receiving money, harrying clerks, or repeating the same phrases to customers. The small intelligence of

this brother and sister had been completely sunk in mastering their business, in debit and credit, and in the study of the rules and customs of the Paris market. Thread, needles, ribbon, pins, buttons, tailors' trimmings, in short, the vast list of articles constituting Paris haberdashery, had filled up their memory. Letters to write and answer, bills and stock-taking, had absorbed all their capabilities.

Outside their line of business they knew absolutely nothing; they did not even know Paris. To them Paris was something spread out round the Rue Saint-Denis. Their narrow nature found its field in their shop. They knew very well how to nag their assistants and shop-girls and find them at fault. Their joy consisted in seeing all their hands as busy on the counters as mice's paws, handling the goods or folding up the pieces. When they heard seven or eight young voices of lads and girls simpering out the time-honored phrases with which shop-assistants reply to a customer's remarks, it was a fine day, nice weather. When ethereal blue brought life to Paris, and Parisians out walking thought of no haberdashery but what they wore, "Bad weather for business," the silly master would observe. The great secret, which made Rogron the object of his apprentices' admiration, was his art in tying, untying, retying, and making up a parcel. Rogron could pack a parcel and look out at what was going on in the street, or keep an eye on his shop to its furthest depths; he had seen everything by the time he handed it to the buyer, saying, "Madame—nothing more this morning?"

But for his sister, this simpleton would have been ruined. Sylvie had good sense and the spirit of trade. She advised her brother as to his purchases from the manufacturers, and relentlessly sent him off to the other end of France to make a sou of profit on some article. The shrewdness, of which every woman possesses more or less, having no duty to do for her heart, she had utilized it in speculation. Stock to be paid for! this thought was the piston that worked this machine and gave it appalling energy. Rogron was never

more than head-assistant; he did not understand his business as a whole; personal interest, the chief motor of the mind, had not carried him forward one step. He often stood dismayed when his sister desired him to sell some article at a loss, foreseeing that it would go out of fashion; and afterward he guilelessly admired her. He did not reason well or ill; he was incapable of reasoning; but he had sense enough to submit to his sister, and he did so for a reason that had nothing to do with business. "She is the eldest," he would say. Physiologists and moralists may possibly find in such a persistently solitary life, reduced to satisfying mere needs, and deprived of money and pleasure in youth, an explanation of the animal expression of face, the weak brain, and idiotic manner of this haberdasher. His sister had always hindered his marrying, fearing perhaps that she might lose her influence in the house, and seeing a source of expense and ruin in a wife certainly younger, and probably less hideous, than herself.

Stupidity may betray itself in two ways—it is talkative or it is mute. Mute stupidity may be endured; but Rogron's was talkative. The tradesman had fallen into the habit of scolding his assistants, of expatiating to them on the minutiæ of the haberdashery business and selling to "the trade," ornamenting his lectures with the flat jokes that constitute the *bagout*, the gab of the shops. (This word *bagout*, used formerly to designate the stereotyped repartee, has given way before the soldier's slang word *blague* or humbug.) Rogron, to whom his little domestic audience were bound to listen, Rogron, very much pleased with himself, had finally adopted a set of phrases of his own. The chatterbox believed himself eloquent. The need for explaining to customers the thing they want, for finding out their wishes, for making them want the thing they do not want, loosens the tongue of the counter-jumper. The retail dealer at last acquires the faculty of pouring out sentences in which words have no meaning, but which answer their purpose. Then he can explain to his customers methods of manufacture

unknown to them, and this gives him a sort of short-lived superiority over the purchaser; but apart from the thousand and one explanations necessitated by the thousand and one articles he sells, he is, so far as thought is concerned, like a fish on straw in the sunshine.

Rogron and Sylvie—a pair of machines illicitly baptized—had neither potentially nor actively the feelings which give life to the heart. These two beings were utterly dry and tough, hardened by toil, by privations, by the remembrance of their sufferings during a long and weariful apprenticeship. Neither he nor she had pity for any misfortune. They were not implacable, but impenetrable with regard to anybody in difficulties. To them virtue, honor, loyalty, every human feeling was epitomized in the regular payment of their accounts. Close-fisted, heartless, and sordidly thrifty, the brother and sister had a terrible reputation among the traders of the Rue Saint-Denis.

But for their visits to Provins, whither they went thrice a year, at times when they could shut the shop for two or three days, they would never have got shop-lads and girls. But old Rogron packed off to his children every unhappy creature intended by its parents to go into trade; he carried on for them a business in apprentices in Provins, where he vaunted with much vanity his children's fortune. The parents, tempted by the remote hope of having their son or daughter well taught and well looked after, and the chance of seeing a child some day step into Rogron junior's business, sent the youth who was in the way to the house kept by the old bachelor and old maid. But as soon as the apprentices, man or maid, for whom the fee of a hundred crowns was always paid, saw any way of escaping from these galleys, they fled with a glee which added to the terrible notoriety of the Rogrons. The indefatigable innkeeper always supplied them with fresh victims.

From the age of fifteen Sylvie Rogron, accustomed to grimace over the counter, had two faces—the amiable mask of the saleswoman, and the natural expression of a shrivelled

old maid. Her assumed countenance was a marvellous piece of mimicry; she smiled all over; her voice turned soft and insinuating, and held the customers under a commercial spell. Her real face was what she had shown between the two half-opened shutters. It would have scared the bravest of the Cossacks of 1815, though they dearly loved every variety of Frenchwoman.

When the letter came from the Lorrains, the Rogrons, in mourning for their father, had come into possession of the house they had almost stolen from Pierrette's grandmother, of the innkeeper's acquired land, and finally of certain sums derived from usurious loans in mortgages on land in the hands of peasant owners whom the old drunkard hoped to dispossess. The charge on the business was paid off. The Rogrons had stock to the value of about sixty thousand francs in the shop, about forty thousand francs in their cash-box or in assets, and the value of their goodwill. Seated on the bench covered with striped green worsted velvet, and fitted into a square recess behind the cash-desk, with just such another desk opposite for the forewoman, the brother and sister held council as to their plans. Every tradesman hopes to retire. If they realized their whole stock and business, they ought to have about a hundred and fifty thousand francs, without counting their inheritance from old Rogron. Thus by investing in the funds the capital at their disposal each of them would have three to four thousand francs a year, even if they devoted the price of the business—which would no doubt be paid in instalments—to restoring their paternal home. So they might go to Provins and live there in a house of their own.

Their forewoman was the daughter of a rich farmer at Donnemarie, who was burdened with nine children; thus he was obliged to place them all in business, for his wealth, divided among nine, would be little enough for each. But in five years the farmer lost seven of his children, consequently the forewoman had become an interesting person;

so much so that Rogron had attempted, but vainly, to make her his wife. The young lady manifested an aversion for the master which nullified all his manœuvres. On the other hand, Mademoiselle Sylvie did not encourage the plan; she even opposed her brother's marriage, and wanted rather to have so clever a woman as their successor. Rogron's marriage she postponed till they should be settled at Provins.

No passer-by can understand the motive power that underlies the cryptogamic lives of certain shopkeepers; as we look at them we wonder, "On what, and why do they live? What becomes of them? Where did they come from?" We lose ourselves in vacancy as we try to account for them. To discover the little poetry that germinates in these brains and vivifies these existences, we must dig into them; but we soon reach the tufa on which everything rests. The Paris shopkeeper feeds on hopes more or less likely to be realized, and without which he would evidently perish: one dreams of building or managing a theatre, another struggles for the honors of the Mairie; this one has a castle in the air three leagues from Paris, a so-called park, where he plants colored plaster statues and arranges fountains that look like an end of thread, and spends immense sums; that one longs for promotion to the higher grades of the National Guard. Provins, an earthly paradise, excited in the two haberdashers the fanaticism which the inhabitants of every pretty town in France feel for their home. And to the glory of Champagne, it may be said that this affection is amply justified. Provins, one of the most charming spots in France, rivals Frangistan and the valley of Cashmere; not only has it all the poetry of Saadi, the Homer of Persia, but it also has pharmaceutical treasures for medical science. The crusaders brought roses from Jericho to this delightful valley, where, by some chance, the flowers developed new qualities without losing anything of their color. And Provins is not only the Persia of France; it might be Baden, Aix, Bath; it has mineral waters.

This is the picture seen year after year, which now and

again appeared in a vision to the haberdashers on the muddy pavement of the Rue Saint-Denis.

After crossing the gray flats that lie between la Ferté-Gaucher and Provins—a desert, but a fertile one, a desert of wheat—you mount a hill. Suddenly, at your feet, you see a town watered by two rivers; at the bottom of the slope spreads a green valley broken by graceful lines and retreating distances. If you come from Paris you take Provins lengthwise; you see the everlasting French highroad running along the foot of the hill and close under it, owning its blind man and its beggars, who throw in an accompaniment of lamentable voices when you pause to gaze at this unexpectedly picturesque tract of land. If you arrive from Troyes, you come in from the plain. The castle and the old town, with its rampart, climb the shelves of the hill. The new town lies below.

There are upper and lower Provins; above, a town in the air, with steep streets and fine points of view, surrounded by hollow roads like ravines between rows of walnut-trees, furrowing the narrow hilltop with deep cuttings: a silent town this, clean and solemn, overshadowed by the imposing ruins of the stronghold; then, below, a town of mills, watered by the Voulzie and the Durtain, two rivers of Brie, narrow, sluggish, and deep; a town of inns and trade, of retired tradespeople, traversed by diligences, chaises and heavy carts. These two towns—or this town—with its historical associations, with the melancholy of its ruins, the gayety of its valley, its delightful ravines full of unkempt hedgerows and wildflowers, its river terraced with gardens, has so sure a hold on the love of its children that they behave like the sons of Auvergne, of Savoy, of France. Though they leave Provins to seek their fortune, they always come back to it. The phrase, "To die in one's burrow," made for rabbits and faithful souls, might be taken by the natives of Provins as their motto.

And so the two Rogrons thought only of their beloved Provins. As he sold thread, the brother saw the old town.

While packing cards covered with buttons, he was gazing at the valley. He rolled and unrolled tape, but he was following the gleaming course of the rivers. As he looked at his pigeon-holes he was climbing the sunk roads whither of old he fled to evade his father's rage, to eat walnuts, and to cram on blackberries. The little Square at Provins above all filled his thoughts; he would beautify the house; he dreamed of the front he would rebuild, the bedrooms, the sitting-room, the billiard-room, the dining-room; then of the kitchen garden, which he would turn into an English garden with a lawn, grottos, fountains, statues, and what not?

The rooms in which the brother and sister slept on the second floor of the house, three windows wide and six stories high—there are many such in the Rue Saint-Denis—had no furniture beyond what was strictly necessary; but not a soul in Paris had finer furniture than this haberdasher. As he walked in the streets he would stand in the attitude of an ecstatic, looking at the handsome pieces on show, and examining hangings with which he filled his house. On coming home he would say to his sister, "I saw a thing in such or such a shop that would just do for us!" The next day he would buy another, and invariably he gave up one month the choice of the month before. The revenue would not have paid for his architectural projects; he wanted everything, and always gave the preference to the newest thing. When he studied the balconies of a newly built house, and the doubtful attempts at exterior decoration, he thought the moldings, sculpture, and ornament quite out of place. "Ah!" he would say to himself, "those fine things would look much better at Provins than they do there." As he digested his breakfast on his doorstep, leaning his back against the shop side, with a hazy eye the haberdasher saw a fantastic dwelling, golden in the sunshine of his dream; he walked in a garden, listening to his fountain as it splashed in a shower of diamonds on a round flag of limestone. He played billiards on his own table; he planted flowers.

When his sister sat, pen in hand, lost in thought, and forgetting to scold the shopmen, she was seeing herself receiving the townsfolk of Provins, gazing at herself in the tall mirrors of her drawing-room, and wearing astounding caps. Both brother and sister were beginning to think that the atmosphere of the Rue Saint-Denis was unwholesome, and the smell of the mud in the market made them long for the scent of the roses of Provins. They suffered alike from homesickness and monomania, both thwarted by the necessity for selling their last remnants of thread, reels of silk, and buttons. The promised land of the valley of Provins attracted these Israelites all the more strongly because they had for a long time really suffered, and had crossed with gasping breath the sandy deserts of haberdashery.

The letter from the Lorrains arrived in the middle of a meditation on that beautiful future. The haberdashers scarcely knew their cousin Pierrette Lorrain. The settlement of Auffray's estate, long since, by the old innkeeper, had taken place when they were going into business, and Rogron never said much about his money matters. Having been sent to Paris so young, the brother and sister could hardly remember their aunt Lorrain. It took them an hour of genealogical discussion to recall their aunt, the daughter of their grandfather Auffray's second wife, and their mother's half-sister. They then remembered that Madame Lorrain's mother was the Madame Néraud who had died of grief. They concluded that their grandfather's second marriage had been a disastrous thing for them, the result being the division of Auffray's estate between two families. They had, indeed, heard sundry recriminations from their father, who was always somewhat of the grudging publican. The pair studied the Lorrains' letter through the medium of these reminiscences, which were not in Pierrette's favor. To take charge of an orphan, a girl, a cousin, who in any case would be their heiress in the event of their neither of them marrying—this was matter for discussion. The question was regarded from every point of view. In the first place, they

had never seen Pierrette. Then it would be very troublesome to have a young girl to look after. Would they not be binding themselves to provide for her? It would be impossible to send her away if they did not like her. Would they not have to find her a husband? And if, after all, Rogron could find "a shoe to fit him" among the heiresses of Provins, would it not be better to keep all they had for his children? The shoe that would fit her brother, according to Sylvie, was a rich girl, stupid and ugly, who would allow her sister-in-law to rule her. The couple decided that they would refuse.

Sylvie undertook to reply. Business was sufficiently pressing to retard this letter, which she did not deem urgent, and indeed the old maid thought no more about it when the forewoman consented to buy the business and stock-in-trade of the *Sœur de famille.*

Sylvie Rogron and her brother had gone to settle in Provins four years before the time when Brigaut's appearance brought so much interest into Pierrette's life. But the doings of these two persons in the country require a description no less than their life in Paris; for Provins was fated to be as evil an influence for Pierrette as her cousins' commercial antecedents.

When a small tradesman who has come to Paris from the provinces returns to the country from Paris, he inevitably brings with him some notions; presently he loses them in the habits of the place where he settles down, and where his fancies for innovations gradually sink. Hence come those slow, small, successive changes which are gradually scratched by Paris on the surface of country-town life, and which are the essential stamp of the change of a retired shopkeeper into a confirmed provincial. This change is a real distemper. No small tradesman can pass without a shock from perpetual talk to utter silence, from the activity of his Paris life to the stagnation of the country. When the good folks have earned a little money, they spend a certain amount on the passion they have so long been hatching, and work off

the last spasms of an energy which cannot be stopped short at will. Those who have never cherished any definite plan, travel, or throw themselves into the political interests of the municipality. Some go out shooting or fishing, and worry their farmers and tenants. Some turn usurers, like old father Rogron, or speculate, like many obscure persons.

The dream of this brother and sister is known to you; they wanted to indulge their magnificent fancy for handling the trowel, for building a delightful house. This fixed idea had graced the Square of lower Provins with the frontage which Brigaut had just been examining, the interior arrangements of the house, and its luxurious furniture. The builder drove never a nail in without consulting the Rogrons, without making them sign the plans and estimates, without explaining in lengthy detail the structure of the object under discussion, where it was made, and the various prices. As to anything unusual, it had always been introduced by Monsieur Tiphaine or Madame Julliard the younger, or Monsieur Garceland, the Maire. Such a resemblance with some wealthy citizen of Provins always carried the day in the builder's favor.

"Oh, if Monsieur Garceland has got one we will have it!" said Mademoiselle Sylvie. "It must be right; he had good taste."

"Sylvie, he suggests we should have ovolos in the cornice of the passage."

"You call that an ovolo?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"But why? What a queer name! I never heard it before."

"But you have seen them?"

"Yes."

"Do you know Latin?"

"No."

"Well, it means egg-shaped; the ovolo is egg-shaped."

"You are a queer crew, you architects!" cried Rogron. "That, no doubt, is the reason you charge so much; you don't throw away your egg-shells!"

"Shall we paint the passage?" asked the builder.

"Certainly not!" cried Sylvie. "Another five hundred francs!"

"But the drawing-room and the stairs are so nice, it is a pity not to decorate the passage," said the builder. "Little Madame Lesourd had hers painted last year."

"And yet her husband, being crown prosecutor, cannot stay at Provins—"

"Oh! he will be President of the Courts here some day," said the builder.

"And what do you think is to become of Monsieur Tiphaine then?"

"Monsieur Tiphaine! He has a pretty wife; I am not uneasy about him. Monsieur Tiphaine will go to Paris."

"Shall we paint the corridor?"

"Yes; the Lesourds will, at any rate, see that we are as good as they are," said Rogron.

The first year of their residence in Provins was wholly given up to these discussions, to the pleasure of seeing the workmen busy, to the surprises and information of all kinds that they got by it, and to the attempts made by the brother and sister to scrape acquaintance with the most important families in the town.

The Rogrons had never had any kind of society; they had never gone out of their shop; they knew literally no one in Paris, and they thirsted for the pleasures of visiting. On their return they found first Monsieur and Madame Julliard, of the *Ver chinois*, with their children and grandchildren; then the Guépin family, or, to be exact, the Guépin clan; the grandson still kept the shop of the Trois Quenouilles; and finally, Madame Guénée, who had sold them the business of the *Sœur de famille;* her three daughters were married in Provins. These three great tribes—the Julliards, the Guépins, and the Guénées—spread over the town like couch-grass on a lawn. Monsieur Garceland, the Maire, was Monsieur Guépin's son-in-law. The Curé, Monsieur l'Abbé Péroux, was own brother to Madame Jul-

liard, who was a Péroux. The President of the Court, Monsieur Tiphaine, was brother to Madame Guénée, who signed herself "*née* Tiphaine."

The queen of the town was Madame Tiphaine *junior*, the handsome only daughter of Madame Roguin, who was the wealthy wife of a notary of Paris; but he was never mentioned. Delicate, pretty, and clever, married to a provincial husband by the express management of her mother, who would not have her with her, and had taken her from school only a few days before her marriage, Mélanie felt herself an exile at Provins, where she behaved admirably well. She was already rich, and had great expectations. As to Monsieur Tiphaine, his old father had advanced his eldest daughter, Madame Guénée, so much money on account of her share of the property, that an estate worth eight thousand francs a year, at about five leagues from Provins, would fall to the President. Thus the Tiphaines, who had married on twenty thousand francs a year, exclusive of the President's salary and residence, expected some day to have twenty thousand francs a year more. They were not out of luck, people said.

Madame Tiphaine's great and only object in life was to secure her husband's election as deputy. Once in Paris, the deputy would be made judge, and from the Lower Court she promised herself he should soon be promoted to the High Court of Justice. Hence she humored everybody's vanity, and strove to please; more difficult still, she succeeded. The young woman of two-and-twenty received twice a week, in her handsome house in the old town, all the citizen class of Provins. She had not yet taken a single awkward step on the slippery ground where she stood. She gratified every conceit, patted every hobby; grave with serious folks, and a girl with girls, of all things a mother with the mothers, cheerful with the young wives, eager to oblige, polite to all; in short, a pearl, a gem, the pride of Provins. She had not yet said the word, but all the electors of the town awaited the day when their dear President should be

old enough to nominate him at once. Every voter, sure of his talents, made him his man and his patron. Oh yes, Monsieur Tiphaine would get on; he would be Keeper of the Seals, and he would promote the interests of Provins.

These were the means by which Madame Tiphaine had been so fortunate as to obtain her ascendency over the little town of Provins. Madame Guénée, Monsieur Tiphaine's sister, after seeing her three daughters married—the eldest to Monsieur Lesourd the public prosecutor, the second to Monsieur Martener the doctor, and the third to Monsieur Auffray the notary—had herself married again Monsieur Galardon, the collector of taxes. Mesdames Lesourd, Martener, and Auffray, and their mother Madame Galardon, regarded the President as the wealthiest and cleverest man in the family. The public prosecutor, Monsieur Tiphaine's nephew by marriage, had the greatest interest in getting his uncle to Paris, so as to be made President himself. Hence these four ladies—for Madame Galardon adored her brother—formed a little court about Madame Tiphaine, taking her opinion and advice on every subject.

Then Monsieur Julliard's eldest son, married to the only daughter of a rich farmer, was taken with a sudden passion, a *grande passion*, secret and disinterested, for the President's wife—that angel dropped from the sky of Paris. Mélanie, very wily, incapable of burdening herself with a Julliard, but perfectly capable of keeping him as an Amadis and making use of his folly, advised him to start a newspaper to which she was the Egeria. So for two years now Julliard, animated by his romantic passion, had managed a paper and run a diligence for Provins. The newspaper, entitled "La Ruche" (The Beehive), included literary, archæological, and medical papers concocted in the family. The advertisements of the district paid the expenses; the subscriptions—about two hundred—were all profit. Melancholy verses sometimes appeared in it, unintelligible to the country people, and addressed "To Her!!!" with the three points of admiration. Thus the young Julliard couple,

singing the merits of Madame Tiphaine, had allied the clan Julliard to that of the Guénées. Thenceforward the President's drawing-room, of course, led the society of the town. The very few aristocrats who lived at Provins met in a single house in the old town, that of the old Comtesse de Bréautey.

During the first six months after their transplanting, the Rogrons, by favor of their old-time connection with the Julliards, the Guépins, and the Guénées, and by emphasizing their relationship to Monsieur Auffray the notary—a great-grandnephew of their grandfather's—were received at first by Madame Julliard the elder and Madame Galardon; then, not without difficulty, they found admission to the beautiful Madame Tiphaine's drawing-room. Everybody wished to know something about the Rogrons before inviting them to call. It was a little difficult to avoid receiving tradespeople of the Rue Saint-Denis, natives of Provins, who had come back to spend their money there. Nevertheless, the instinct of society is always to bring together persons of similar fortune, education, manners, acquaintance, and character. Now the Guépins, the Guénées, and the Julliards were of a higher grade, and of older family, than the Rogrons—the children of a money-lending innkeeper who could not be held blameless in his private life, nor with regard to the Auffray inheritance. Auffray the notary, Madame Galardon's son-in-law, knew all about it; the estate had been wound up in his predecessor's office. Those older merchants, who had retired twelve years since, had found themselves on the level of education, breeding, and manners of the circle to which Madame Tiphaine imparted a certain stamp of elegance, of Paris varnish. Everything was homogeneous; they all understood each other, and knew how to conduct themselves, and talk so as to be agreeable to the rest. They knew each other's characters, and were accustomed to agree. Having been once received by Monsieur Garceland the Maire, the Rogrons flattered themselves that

they should soon be on intimate terms with the best society of the town. Sylvie learned to play boston. Rogron, far too stupid to play any game, twirled his thumbs and swallowed his words when once he had talked about his house. But the words acted like medicine; they seemed to torture him cruelly; he rose, he looked as if he were about to speak; he took fright and sat down again, his lips comically convulsed. Sylvie unconsciously displayed her nature at games. Fractious and complaining whenever she lost, insolently triumphant when she won, contentious and fretful, she irritated her adversaries and her partners, and was a nuisance to everybody.

Eaten up with silly and undisguised envy, Rogron and his sister tried to play a part in a town where a dozen families had formed a net of close meshes; all their interests, all their vanities made, as it were, a slippery floor on which new-comers had to tread very cautiously to avoid running up against something or getting a fall. Allowing that the rebuilding of their house might cost thirty thousand francs, the brother and sister between them would still have ten thousand francs a year. They fancied themselves very rich, bored their acquaintance to death with their talk of future splendor, and so gave the measure of their meanness, their crass ignorance, and their idiotic jealousy. The evening they were introduced to Madame Tiphaine the beauty—who had already watched them at Madame Garceland's, at her sister-in-law's, Madame Galardon's, and at the elder Madame Julliard's—the queen of Provins said in a confidential tone to Julliard *junior*, who remained alone with her and the President a few minutes after every one was gone—

"You all seem to be much smitten with these Rogrons?"

"I!" said the Amadis of Provins; "they bore my mother; they overpower my wife; and when Mademoiselle Sylvie was sent, thirty years ago, as an apprentice to my father, even then he could not endure her."

"But I have a very great mind," said the pretty lady,

putting a little foot on the bar of the fender, "to give them to understand that my drawing-room is not an inn-parlor."

Julliard cast up his eyes to the ceiling as much as to say: "Dear Heaven, what wit, what subtlety!"

"I wish my company to be select, and if I admit the Rogrons it will certain not be that."

"They have no heart, no brain, no manners," said the President. "When after having sold thread for twenty years, as my sister did, for instance—"

"My dear, your sister would not be out of place in any drawing-room," said Madame Tiphaine, in a parenthesis.

"If people are so stupid as to remain haberdashers to the end," the President went on; "if they do not cast their skin; if they think that 'Comtes de Champagne' means 'accounts for wine,' as the Rogrons did this evening, they should stay at home."

"They are noisome!" said Julliard. "You might think there was only one house in Provins. They want to crush us, and, after all, they have hardly enough to live on."

"If it were only the brother," said Madame Tiphaine, "we might put up with him. He is not offensive. Give him a Chinese puzzle, and he would sit quietly in a corner. It would take him the whole winter to put up one pattern. But Mademoiselle Sylvie! What a voice—like a hyena with a cold. What lobster's claws! Do not repeat anything of this, Julliard."

When Julliard was gone, the little lady said to her husband:

"My dear, there are enough of the natives that I am obliged to receive; these two more would be the death of me; and with your permission, we will deprive ourselves of the pleasure."

"You are the mistress in your own house," said the President, "but we shall make many enemies. The Rogrons will join the Opposition, which hitherto has had no solidity in Provins. That Rogron is already hanging on to Baron Gouraud and Vinet the lawyer."

"Heh!" said Mélanie, with a smile, "they will do you service then. Where there are no enemies, there is no triumph. A Liberal conspiracy, an illegal society, a fight of some kind, would bring you into the foreground."

The President looked at his young wife with a sort of alarmed admiration.

Next day every one at Madame Garceland's said in every one else's ear that the Rogrons had not had a success at Madame Tiphaine's, and her remark about the inn-parlor was much applauded. Madame Tiphaine took a month before returning Mademoiselle Sylvie's visit. This rudeness is much remarked on in the country. Then, at Madame Tiphaine's, when playing boston with the elder Madame Julliard, Sylvie made a most unpleasant scene about a splendid *misère* hand, on which her erewhile mistress caused her to lose—maliciously and on purpose, she declared. Sylvie, who loved to play nasty tricks on others, could never accept a return in kind. Madame Tiphaine, therefore, set the example of making up the card-parties before the Rogrons arrived, so that Sylvie was reduced to wandering from table to table, watching others play, while they looked at her askance with meaning glances. At old Madame Julliard's, whist was now the game, and Sylvie could not play it. The old maid at last understood that she was an outlaw, but without understanding the reason. She believed herself to be an object of jealousy to everybody.

Ere long the Rogrons were asked nowhere; but they persistently spent their evenings at various houses. Clever people made game of them, without venom, quite mildly, leading them to talk utter nonsense about the *ovolos* in their house, and about a certain cellaret for liqueurs, matchless in Provins. Meanwhile they gave themselves the final blow. Of course, they gave a few sumptuous dinners, as much in return for the civilities they had received as to show off their splendor. The guests came solely out of curiosity. The first dinner was given to Monsieur and Madame Tiphaine, with whom the Rogrons had not once dined; to Messieurs and Mesdames

Julliard, father and son, mother and daughter-in-law; to Monsieur Lesourd, Monsieur the Curé, Monsieur and Madame Galardon. It was one of those provincial spreads, where the guests sit at table from five o'clock till nine. Madame Tiphaine had introduced the grand Paris style to Provins, the well-bred guests going away as soon as coffee had been served. She had some friends that evening at home, and tried to steal away, but the Rogrons escorted the couple to the very street; and when they returned, bewildered at having failed to keep the President and his wife, the other guests explained Madame Tiphaine's good taste, and imitated it with a promptitude that was cruel in a country town.

"They will not see our drawing-room lighted up!" cried Sylvie, "and candle-light is like rouge to it."

The Rogrons had hoped to give their guests a surprise. No one hitherto had been admitted to see this much-talked-of house. And all the frequenters of Madame Tiphaine's drawing-room impatiently awaited her verdict as to the marvels of the "*Palais* Rogron."

"Well," said little Madame Martener, "you have seen the Louvre? Tell us all about it."

"But all—like the dinner—will not amount to much."

"What is it like?"

"Well, the front door, of which we were, of course, required to admire the gilt-iron window frames that you all know, opens into a long passage through the house, dividing it unequally, since there is but one window to the street on the right, and two on the left. At the garden end this passage has a glass door to steps leading down to the lawn, a lawn with a decorative pedestal supporting a plaster cast of the Spartacus, painted to imitate bronze. Behind the kitchen the architect has contrived a little pantry under the staircase, which we were not spared seeing. The stair, painted throughout like yellow-veined marble, is a hollow spiral, just like the stairs that in a café lead from the ground floor to the entresol. This trumpery structure of walnut wood, really dangerously light, and with banisters picked

out with brass, was displayed to us as one of the seven new wonders of the world. The way to the cellars is beneath.

"On the other side of the passage, looking on the street, is the dining-room, opening by folding doors into the drawing-room, of the same size, but looking on to the garden."

"So there is no hall?" said Madame Auffray.

"The hall, no doubt, is the long passage where you stand in a draught," replied Madame Tiphaine. "We have had the eminently national, liberal, constitutional, and patriotic notion," she went on, "of making use only of wood grown in France! In the dining-room, the floor, laid in a neat pattern, is of walnut wood. The sideboards, table, and chairs are also in walnut. The window curtains are of white cotton with red borders, looped back with vulgar ropes over enormous pegs with elaborate dull-gilt rosettes, the mushroom-like object standing out against a reddish paper. These magnificent curtains run on rods ending in huge scrolls, and are held up by lions' claws in stamped brass, one at the top of each pleat.

"Over one of the sideboards is a regular café clock, draped, as it were, with a sort of napkin in bronze gilt, an idea that quite enchants the Rogrons. They tried to make me admire this device; and I could find nothing better to say than that if it could ever be proper to hang a napkin round a clock face, it was, no doubt, in a dining-room. On this sideboard are two large lamps, like those which grace the counters of grand restaurants. Over the other is a highly decorative barometer, which seems to play an important part in their existence; Rogron gazes at it as he might gaze at his bride-elect. Between the windows the builder has placed a white earthenware stove in a hideously ornate niche. The walls blaze with a splendid paper in red and gold, such as you will see in these same restaurants, and Rogròn chose it there no doubt on the spot.

"Dinner was served in a set of white-and-gold china; the dessert service is bright blue with green sprigs; but they opened the china closet to show us that they had another

service of stoneware for everyday use. The linen is in large cupboards facing the sideboards. Everything is varnished, shining, new, and harsh in color. Still, I could accept the dining-room; it has a character of its own which, though not pleasing, is fairly representative of that of the owners: but there is no enduring the five engravings—those black-and-white things against which the Minister of the Interior ought really to get a decree; they represent Poniatowski leaping into the Elster, the Defence of the Barrière de Clichy, Napoleon himself pointing a gun, and two prints of Mazeppa, all in gilt frames of a vulgar pattern suitable to the prints, which are enough to make one loathe popularity. Oh! how much I prefer Madame Julliard's pastels representing fruits, those capital pastels which were done in the time of Louis XV., and which harmonize with the nice old dining-room and its dark, rather worm-eaten panels, which are at least characteristic of the country, and suit the heavy family silver, the antique china, and all our habits. The country is provincial; it becomes ridiculous when it tries to ape Paris. You may perhaps retort 'Vous êtes orfévre, Monsieur Josse!' —'You are to the manner born.' But I prefer this old room of my father-in-law Tiphaine's, with its heavy curtains of green-and-white damask, its Louis XV. chimney-piece, its scroll pattern pier glass, its old beaded mirrors and time-honored card-tables; my jars of old Sèvres, old blue, mounted in old gilding; my clock with its impossible flowers, my out-of-date chandelier, and my tapestried furniture, to all the splendor of their drawing-room."

"What is it like?" said Monsieur Martener, delighted with the praise of the country so ingeniously brought in by the pretty Parisienne.

"The drawing-room is a fine red—as red as Mademoiselle Sylvie when she is angry at losing a *misère*."

"Sylvie-red," said the President, and the word took its place in the vocabulary of the district.

"The window-curtains—red! the furniture—red! the chimney-piece—red marble veined with yellow! the can-

delabra and clock—red marble veined with yellow, and mounted in a heavy vulgar style; Roman lamp-brackets supported on Greek foliage! From the top of the clock a lion stares down on you, stupidly, as the Rogrons stare; a great good-natured lion, the ornamental lion so called, which will long continue to dethrone real lions; he spends his life clutching a black ball exactly like a deputy of the Left. Perhaps it is a Constitutional allegory. The dial of this clock is an extraordinary piece of work.

"The chimney glass is framed with appliqué ornaments which look poor and cheap though they are a novelty. But the upholsterer's genius shines most in a panel of red stuff of which the radiating folds all centre in a rosette in the middle of the chimney-board—a romantic poem composed expressly for the Rogrons, who display it with ecstasy. From the ceiling hangs a chandelier, carefully wrapped in a green cotton shroud, and with reason; it is in the very worst taste, raw-toned bronze, with even more detestable tendrils of brown gold. Under it a round tea-table of marble, with more yellow than ever in the red, displays a shining metal tray, on which glitter cups of painted china —such painting!—arranged round a cut-glass sugar-basin, so bold in style that our grandchildren will open their eyes in amazement at the gilt rings round the edge and the diamond pattern on the sides, like a medieval quilted doublet, and at the tongs for taking the sugar, which probably no one will ever use.

"This room is papered with red flock-paper imitating velvet, divided into panels by a beading of gilt brass, finished at the corners with enormous palms. A chromo-lithograph hangs on each panel, framed most elaborately in plaster casting of garlands to imitate fine wood-carving. The furniture of elm-root, upholstered with satin-cloth, classically consists of two sofas, two large easy-chairs, six armchairs, and six light chairs. The console is graced by an alabaster vase, called à la Medicis, under a glass shade, and by the much-talked-of liqueur-case. We were told often enough that

'there is not such another in Provins.' In each window bay, hung with splendid red silk curtains and lace curtains besides, stands a card-table. The carpet is Aubusson; the Rogrons have not failed to get hold of the crimson ground with medallions of flowers, the vulgarest of all the common patterns.

"The room looks uninhabited; there are no books or prints—none of the little things that furnish a table," and she looked at her own table covered with fashionable trifles, albums, and the pretty toys that were given her. "There are no flowers, none of the little nothings that fade and are renewed. It is all as cold and dry as Mademoiselle Sylvie. Buffon is right in saying that the style is the man, and certainly drawing-rooms have a style!"

Pretty Madame Tiphaine went on with her description by epigrams; and from this specimen, it is easy to imagine the rooms in which the brother and sister really lived on the first floor, which they also displayed to their guests. Still, no one could conceive of the foolish expenses into which the cunning builder had dragged the Rogrons; the moldings of the doors, the elaborate inside shutters, the plaster ornaments on the cornices, the fancy painting, the brass-gilt knobs and bells, the ingenious smoke-consuming fireplaces, the contrivances for the prevention of damp, the sham inlaid wood on the staircase, the elaborate glass and smith's work—in short, all the fancy-work which adds to the cost of building, and delights the common mind, had been lavished without stint.

No one would go to the Rogrons' evenings; their pretensions were still-born. There were abundant reasons for refusing; every day was taken up by Madame Garceland, Madame Galardon, the two Julliard ladies, Madame Tiphaine, the Sous-préfet, etc. The Rogrons thought that giving dinners was all that was needed to get into society; they secured some young people who laughed at them, and some diners-out, such as are to be found in every part of the world; but serious people quite gave them up. Sylvie,

alarmed at the clear loss of forty thousand francs swallowed up without any return in the house she called her dear house, wanted to recover the sum by economy. So she soon ceased to give dinners that cost from thirty to forty francs, without the wine, as they failed to realize her hope of forming a circle—a thing as difficult to create in the country as it is in Paris. Sylvie dismissed her cook, and hired a country girl for the coarser work. She herself cooked "to amuse herself."

Thus, fourteen months after their return home, the brother and sister had drifted into a life of isolation and idleness. Her banishment from "the world" had roused in Sylvie's soul an intense hatred of the Tiphaines, Julliards, Auffrays, and Garcelands—in short, of everybody in Provins society, which she stigmatized as a *clique*, with which she was on the most distant terms. She would gladly have set up a rival circle; but the second-rate citizen class was composed entirely of small tradespeople, never free but on Sundays and holidays; or of persons in ill-odor, like Vinet the lawyer and Doctor Néraud; or of rank Bonapartists, like General Gouraud; and Rogron very rashly made friends with these, though the upper set had vainly warned him against them. The brother and sister were obliged to sit together by the fire of their dining-room stove, talking over their business, the faces of their customers, and other equally amusing matters.

The second winter did not come to an end without their being almost crushed by its weight of dulness. They had the greatest difficulty in spending the hours of their day. As they went to bed at night, they thought, "One more over!" They spun out the morning by getting up late and dressing slowly. Rogron shaved himself every morning; he examined his face and described to his sister the changes he fancied he noted in it; he squabbled with the maid over the temperature of the hot water; he wandered into the garden to see if the flowers were sprouting; he ventured down to the river-bank, where he had built a summer-house; he

examined the woodwork of the house. Had it warped? Had the settling split any of the panels? Was the paint wearing well? Then he came in to discuss his anxieties as to a sick hen, or some spot where the damp had left stains, talking to his sister, who affected hurry in laying the table while she scolded the maid. The barometer was the most useful article in the house to Rogron; he consulted it for no reason, tapped it familiarly like a friend, and then said, "Vile weather!" to which his sister would reply, "Pooh, the weather is quite seasonable." If anybody called, he would boast of the excellence of this instrument.

Their breakfast took up some little time. How slowly did these two beings masticate each mouthful. And their digestion was perfect; they had no cause to fear cancer of the stomach. By reading the "Ruche" and the "Constitutionnel" they got on to noon. They paid a third of the subscription to the Paris paper with Vinet and Colonel Gouraud. Rogron himself carried the paper to the Colonel, who lived in the Square, lodging with Monsieur Martener; the soldier's long stories were an immense delight to him. Rogron could only wonder why the Colonel was considered dangerous. He was such an idiot as to speak to him of the ostracism under which he lived, and retail the sayings of the "clique." God only knows what the Colonel—who feared no one, and was as redoubtable with the pistol as with the sword—had to say of "la Tiphaine" and "her Julliard," of the ministerial officials of the upper town: "men brought over by foreigners, capable of anything to stick in their places, cooking the lists of votes at the elections to suit themselves," and the like.

At about two o'clock Rogron sallied forth for a little walk. He was quite happy when a shopkeeper, standing at his door, stopped him with a "How d'ye do, Père Rogron?" He gossiped and asked, "What news in the town?" heard and repeated scandal, or the tittle-tattle of Provins. He walked to the upper town, or in the sunk roads, according to the weather. Sometimes he met other old men airing

themselves in like manner. Such meetings were happy events.

There were at Provins certain men who were out of conceit with the life of Paris, learned and modest men, living with their books. Imagine Rogron's frame of mind when he listened to a supernumerary judge named Desfondrilles, more of an archæologist than a lawyer, saying to a man of education, old Monsieur Martener, the doctor's father, as he pointed to the valley—

"Will you tell me why the idlers of all Europe flock to Spa rather than to Provins, when the waters of Provins are acknowledged to be superior by the whole French faculty of medicine, and to have effects and an energy worthy of the medical properties of our roses?"

"What do you expect?" replied the man of the world, "it is one of the caprices of Caprice, and just as inexplicable. The wines of Bordeaux were unknown a hundred years ago. Maréchal Richelieu, one of the grandest figures of the last century, the Alcibiades of France, was made governor of Guyenne. His chest was delicate—the world knew why—the wine of the country strengthened and restored him to health. Bordeaux at once made a hundred millions of francs a year, and the Marshal extended the Bordeaux district as far as Angoulême and as far as Cahors, in short, to forty leagues in every direction! Who knows where the vineyards of Bordeaux end?—And there is no equestrian statue of the Marshal at Bordeaux!"

"Ah! if such an event should take place at Provins in this century or the next," Monsieur Desfondrilles went on, "I hope that either on the little Square in the lower town, or on the castle, or somewhere in the upper town, some bas-relief would be seen representing the head of Monsieur Opoix, the rediscoverer of the mineral waters of Provins!"

"But, my dear sir, it would perhaps be impossible to rehabilitate Provins," said old Monsieur Martener. "The town is bankrupt."

At this Rogron opened his eyes wide, and exclaimed—

"What!"

Provins was formerly a capital which, in the twelfth century, held its own as a rival to Paris, when the Counts of Champagne held their court here as King René held his in Provence," replied the man of learning. "In those days civilization, pleasure, poetry, elegance, women—in short, all the splendor of social life, was not exclusively restricted to Paris. Towns find it as hard as houses of business to rise again from ruin. Nothing is left to Provins but the fragrance of its historic past and that of its roses—and a sous-préfecture."

"Oh! to think what France might be if she still had all her feudal capitals!" said Desfondrilles. "Can our sous-préfets fill the place of the poetic, gallant and war-like race of Thibault, who made Provins what Ferrara was in Italy, what Weimar was in Germany, and what Munich would like to be in our day?"

"Provins was a capital?" asked Rogron.

"Why, where have you dropped from?" said Desfondrilles the archæologist.

The lawyer struck the pavement of the upper town where they were standing with his stick: "Do not you know," he cried, "that all this part of Provins is built on crypts?"

"Crypts?"

"Yes, to be sure, crypts of unaccountable loftiness and extent. They are like cathedral aisles, full of pillars."

"Monsieur Desfondrilles is writing a great antiquarian work in which he intends to describe these singular structures," said old Martener, seeing the lawyer mount his hobby.

Rogron came home enchanted to think that his house stood in this valley. The crypts of Provins kept him occupied for five or six days in exploring them, and for several evenings afforded a subject of conversation to the old couple. Thus Rogron generally picked up something about old Provins, about the intermarriages of the families, or some stale political news which he retailed to his sister. And a hundred times over in the course of his walk—several times even

of the same person—he would ask, "Well, what is the news? What has happened lately?" When he came in he threw himself on a sofa in the drawing-room as if he were tired out, but really he was only weary of his own weight.

He got on to dinner-time by going twenty times to and fro between the drawing-room and the kitchen, looking at the clock, opening and shutting doors. So long as the brother and sister spent the evenings in other houses they got through the hours till bedtime, but after they were reduced to staying at home the evening was a desert to traverse. Sometimes people on their way home, after spending the evening out, as they crossed the little Place, heard sounds in the Rogrons' house as if the brother were murdering the sister; they recognized them as the terrific yawns of a haberdasher driven to bay. The two machines had nothing to grind with their rusty wheels, so they creaked.

The brother talked of marrying, but with a sense of despair. He felt himself old and worn; a wife terrified him. Sylvie, who understood the need for a third person in the house, then remembered their poor cousin, for whom no one in Provins had ever inquired, for everybody supposed that little Madame Lorrain and her daughter were both dead. Sylvie Rogron never lost anything; she was too thoroughly an old maid to mislay anything, whatever it might be. She affected to have found the letter from the Lorrains so as to make it natural that she should mention Pierrette to her brother, and he was almost happy at the possibility of having a little girl about the house. Sylvie wrote to the old Lorrains in a half-business-like, half-affectionate tone, attributing the delay in her answer to the winding up of their affairs, to their move back to Provins, and settling there. She affected to be anxious to have her little cousin with her, allowing it to be understood that, if Monsieur Rogron should not marry, Pierrette would some day inherit twelve thousand francs a year. It would be needful to have been, like Nebuchadnezzar, to some extent a wild beast, shut up in a cage in a beast-garden with nothing to prey on but butcher's meat

brought in by the keeper, or else a retired tradesman with no shop-clerks to nag, to imagine the impatience with which the brother and sister awaited their cousin Lorrain. Three days after the despatch of the letter they were already wondering when the child would arrive.

Sylvie discerned in her so-called generosity to her penniless cousin a means of changing the views of Provins society with regard to herself. She called on Madame Tiphaine—who had stricken them with her disapproval, and who aimed at creating an upper class at Provins, like that at Geneva—and blew the trumpet to announce the advent of her cousin Pierrette, the child of Colonel Lorrain, pitying her woes, and congratulating herself as a lucky woman on having a pretty young heiress to introduce in society.

"You have been a long time discovering her," remarked Madame Tiphaine, who sat enthroned on a sofa by her fireside.

Madame Garceland, in a few words spoken in an undertone during a deal, revived the story of the Auffray property. The notary related the innkeeper's iniquities.

"Where is the poor little thing?" asked the President politely.

"In Brittany," said Rogron.

"But Brittany is a wide word!" remarked Monsieur Lesourd, the public prosecutor.

"Her grandfather and grandmother wrote to us.—When was it, my dear?" asked Rogron.

Sylvie, absorbed in asking Madame Garceland where she had bought the stuff for her dress, did not foresee the effect of her answer, and said, "Before we sold our business."

"And you answered three days ago, Mademoiselle Sylvie!" exclaimed the notary.

Sylvie turned as red as the hottest coals in the fire.

"We wrote to the Institution of Saint-Jacques," replied Rogron.

"There is a sort of asylum there for old people," said a lawyer, who had been supernumerary judge at Nantes. "But

she cannot be there, for they only take in persons who are past sixty."

"She is there with her grandmother Lorrain," explained Rogron.

"She had a little money, the eight thousand francs left her by your father—no, I mean your grandfather," said the notary, blundering intentionally.

"Indeed!" said Rogron, looking stupid and not understanding this sarcasm.

"Then you knew nothing of your first cousin's fortune or position?" asked the President.

"If Monsieur Rogron had known it, he would not have left her in a place which is no more than a respectable workhouse," said the judge severely. "I remember now that a house belonging to Monsieur and Madame Lorrain was sold at Nantes under an execution; and Mademoiselle Lorrain lost her claims, for I was the commissioner in charge."

The notary spoke of Colonel Lorrain, who, if he were alive, would indeed be astonished to think of his child being in an institution like that of Saint-Jacques. The Rogrons presently withdrew, thinking the world very spiteful. Sylvie perceived that her news had had no success; she had ruined herself in everybody's opinion; henceforth she had no hope of making her way in the higher society of Provins.

From that day the Rogrons no longer dissembled their hatred of the great citizen-families of Provins, and of all their adherents. The brother now repeated all the Liberal fables which Lawyer Vinet and Colonel Gouraud had crammed him with about the Tiphaines, the Guénées, the Garcelands, the Guépins, and the Julliards.

"I tell you what, Sylvie, I don't see why Madame Tiphaine should turn a cold shoulder on the Rue Saint-Denis: the best of her beauty was made there. Madame Roguin, her mother, is a cousin of the Guillaumes of the "Cat and Racket," who gave over their business to their son-in-law Joseph Lebas. Her father is that notary, that Roguin, who failed in 1819, and ruined the Birotteaus. So Madame Tiphaine's money

is stolen wealth; for what is a notary's wife who takes her own settlement out of the fire and allows her husband to become a fraudulent bankrupt? A pretty thing indeed! Ah! I understand! She got her daughter married to live here at Provins through her connection with the banker du Tillet. And these people are proud!—Well! However, that is what the world is!"

On the day when Denis Rogron and his sister Sylvie thus broke out in abuse of the clique, they had, without knowing it, become persons of importance, and were on the highroad to having some society; their drawing-room was on the point of becoming a centre of interests which only needed a stage. The retired haberdasher assumed historical and political dignity, for, still without knowing it, he gave strength and unity to the hitherto unstable elements of the Liberal party at Provins. And this was the way of it: The early career of the Rogrons had been anxiously observed by Colonel Gouraud and the advocate Vinet, who had been thrown together by their isolation and their agreement of ideas. These two men professed equal patriotism, and for the same reasons—they wanted to acquire importance. But though they were anxious to be leaders, they lacked followers. The Liberals of Provins comprised an old soldier who sold lemonade; an innkeeper; Monsieur Cournant, a notary, Monsieur Auffray's rival; Monsieur Néraud, a physician, Doctor Martener's rival; and some independent persons, farmers scattered about the neighborhood, and holders of national stock. The Colonel and the lawyer, glad to attract an idiot whose money might help them in their manœuvres, who would support their subscriptions, who, in some cases, would take the bull by the horns, and whose house would be useful as a town hall for the party, took advantage of the Rogrons' hostility toward the aristocrats of the place. The Colonel, the lawyer, and Rogron had a slight bond in their joint subscription to the "Constitutionnel"; it would not be difficult for the Colonel to make a Liberal of the ex-haberdasher, though Rogron knew so little of political history that he had not

heard of the exploits of Sergeant Mercier; he thought he was a friend and brother.

The impending arrival of Pierrette hastened the hatching of certain covetous dreams to which the ignorance and folly of the old bachelor and old maid had given rise. The Colonel, seeing that Sylvie had lost all chance of getting her foot into the circle of the Tiphaines, had an idea. Old soldiers have seen so many horrors in so many lands, so many naked corpses grimacing hideously on so many battlefields, that an ugly face has no terrors for them, so the Colonel took steady aim at the old maid's fortune. This officer, a short, fat man, wore rings in his ears, which were already graced by bushy tufts of hair. His floating gray whiskers were such as in 1799 had been called "fins." His large, good-natured, red face was somewhat frost-bitten, as were those of all who escaped at the Beresina. His huge, prominent stomach had the flattened angle below characteristic of an old cavalry officer; Gouraud had commanded the second regiment of Hussars. His gray mustache covered a huge mouth—a perfect trap—the only word to describe that abyss; he did not eat, he devoured! A sword-cut had shortened his nose. His speech was in consequence thick and deeply nasal, like that ascribed to Capuchin friars. His hands, which were small, short, and broad, were such as make a woman say, "You have the hands of a thorough scamp." His legs, below such a huge body, looked frail. Within this active but clumsy body lay a cunning spirit, entire experience of life and things—hidden under the apparent carelessness of a soldier—and utter contempt for the conventionalities of society. Colonel Gouraud had the pension of the Cross of the Legion of Honor, and two thousand four hundred francs a year as half-pay—a thousand crowns a year in all for his whole income.

The lawyer, tall and lean, had no talent but his political opinions, and no income but the meagre profits of his business. At Provins solicitors plead their own cases. In view of his opinions, the Court listened with small favor to Maître

Vinet; and the most Liberal farmers, when entangled in lawsuits, would rely on an attorney in favor with the Bench rather than employ Vinet. This man was said to have led astray a rich girl living near Coulommiers, and to have compelled her parents to let her marry him. His wife was one of the Chargebœufs, an old family of nobles in la Brie, who took their name from the exploit of a squire in Saint Louis's expedition to Egypt. She had incurred her parents' displeasure, and they, to Vinet's knowledge, had arranged to leave their whole fortune to their eldest son, charged, no doubt, with a reversion in favor of his sister's children. Thus this man's first ambitious scheme came to nothing. The lawyer, soon haunted by poverty, and ashamed of not having enough to enable his wife to keep up appearances, had made vain efforts to get his foot into a ministerial career; but the rich branch of the Chargebœufs refused to assist him. These Royalists were strictly moral, and disapproved of a compulsory marriage; besides, their would-be relation's name was Vinet; how could they favor any one so common? So the lawyer was handed on from one branch to another when he tried to utilize his wife's interest with her relations. Madame Vinet found no assistance but from one of the family, a widowed Madame Chargebœuf, with a daughter, quite poor, who lived at Troyes. And a day came when Vinet remembered the kind reception his wife met with from this lady.

Rejected by the whole world, full of hatred of his wife's family, of the Government which refused him an appointment, and of the society of Provins which would have nothing to say to him, Vinet accepted his poverty. His venom fermented and gave him energy to endure. He became a Liberal on perceiving that his fortune was bound up with the triumph of the Opposition, and vegetated in a wretched little house in the upper town, which his wife seldom quitted. This girl, born to a better fate, lived absolutely alone in her home with her one child. There are cases of poverty nobly met and cheerfully endured; but Vinet, eaten

up by ambition, and feeling that he had wronged a young creature, cherished a dark indignation; his conscience expanded to admit every means to success. His face, still young, changed for the worse. People were sometimes terrified in Court at the sight of his flat viperine head, with its wide mouth, and eyes that glittered through his spectacles; at hearing his sharp, shrill, rasping voice, that wrung their nerves. His muddy complexion, patchy with sickly hues of yellow and green, revealed his suppressed ambitions, his perpetual mortifications and hidden penury. He could argue and harangue; he had no lack of point and imagery; he was learned and crafty. Accustomed to indulge his imagination for the sake of rising by hook or by crook, he might have made a politician. A man who hesitates at nothing so long as it is legal is a strong man, and in this lay Vinet's strength.

This coming athlete of parliamentary debate—one of the men who were to proclaim the supremacy of the House of Orleans—had a disastrous influence over Pierrette's fate. At present he wanted to provide himself with a weapon by founding a newspaper at Provins. After having studied the Rogrons from afar, with the assistance of the Colonel, he ended by reckoning on the brother. And this time he reckoned with his host; his poverty was to come to an end after seven dolorous years, during which more than one day had come round without bread. On the day when Gouraud announced to Vinet, on the little Square, that the Rogrons had broken with the citizen aristocracy and official circles of the old town, the lawyer nudged him significantly in the ribs.

"This wife or that, ugly or handsome, it must be all the same to you," said he. "You should marry Mademoiselle Rogron, and then we could get something done here—"

"I was thinking of it. But they have sent for the daughter of poor Colonel Lorrain—their heiress," said Gouraud.

"You could make them leave you their money by will. You would have a very nicely fitted house."

"And the child, after all! Well, we shall see," said the Colonel, with a jocose and deeply villanous leer, which showed a man of Vinet's temper how small a thing a little girl was in the eyes of this old soldier.

Since her grandparents had gone into the asylum where they were forlornly ending their days, Pierrette, young and full of pride, was so dreadfully miserable at living there on charity that she was happy to learn that she had some rich connections. On hearing that she was leaving, Brigaut, the Major's son, the companion of her childhood, who was now a joiner's apprentice at Nantes, came to give her the money needful for her journey by coach—sixty francs, all the savings of his odd earnings painfully hoarded; Pierrette accepted it with the sublime indifference of true friendship, showing that she, in similar circumstances, would have been hurt by thanks. Brigaut had gone every Sunday to Saint-Jacques to play with Pierrette, and to comfort her. The sturdy young workman had already gone through his delightful apprenticeship to the perfect and devoted care that we give to the object of our involuntary choice and affection. More than once ere now, Pierrette and he, on a Sunday, sitting in a corner of the garden, had sketched their childish dreams on the veil of the future; the young craftsman, mounted on his plane, travelled round the world, making a fortune for Pierrette, who waited for him.

So, in the month of October, 1824, when Pierrette had almost completed her eleventh year, she was placed in the care of the guard of the diligence from Nantes to Paris by the two old people and the young apprentice, all three dreadfully sad. The guard was requested to put her into the coach for Provins, and to take great care of her. Poor Brigaut! he ran after the diligence like a dog, looking at his dear Pierrette as long as he could. In spite of the child's signals, he ran on for a league beyond the town, and when he was exhausted, his eyes sent a last tearful glance at Pierrette, who cried when she could see him no more. Pierrette

put her head out of the window, and discerned her friend standing squarely, and watching the heavy vehicle that left him behind.

The Lorrains and Brigaut had so little knowledge of life that the little Bretonne had not a sou left when she arrived in Paris. The guard, to whom the child prattled of rich relations, paid her expenses at an inn in Paris, made the guard of the Troyes coach repay him, and desired him to deliver Pierrette to her family and collect the debt, exactly as if she were a parcel by carrier.

Four days after leaving Nantes, at about nine o'clock one Monday evening, a kind, burly old guard of the Messageries Royales took Pierrette by the hand, and while the coach was unloading in the High Street such passengers and parcels as were to be deposited at Provins, he led her, with no luggage but two frocks, two pairs of stockings, and two shifts, to the house pointed out to him by the office clerk as that of Mademoiselle Rogron.

"Good morning, Mademoiselle, and gents all," said the guard. "I have brought you a cousin of yours, and here she be, and a pretty dear too. You have forty-seven francs to pay. Though your little girl has no weight of baggage, please to sign my way-book."

Mademoiselle Sylvie and her brother gave way to their delight and astonishment.

"Begging your pardon," said the guard, "my coach is waiting—sign my sheet and give me forty-seven francs and sixty centimes, and what you please for me and the guard from Nantes, for we have taken as much care of her as if she were our own. We have paid out for her bed and food, her place in the coach here, and other little things."

"Forty-seven francs and twelve sous?" exclaimed Sylvie.

"You're never going to beat me down?" cried the guard.

"But where is the invoice?" said Rogron.

"The invoice!—Here is my way-bill."

"You can talk afterward, pay now!" said Sylvie to her brother; "you see, you cannot help paying."

Rogron went to fetch forty-seven francs twelve sous.

"And nothing for us—for my pal and me?" said the guard.

Sylvie produced a two-franc piece from the depths of her old velvet bag, where her keys lurked in bunches.

"Thank you—keep it," said the man. "We would rather have looked after the little girl for her own sake." He took up his sheet and went out, saying to the servant girl: "A nice place this is! There are crocodiles of that sort without going to Egypt for 'em."

"Those people are horribly coarse!" said Sylvie, who had heard his speech.

"Dame! they took care of the child," replied Adèle, with her hands on her hips.

"We are not obliged to live with him," said Rogron.

"Where is she to sleep?" asked the maid.

Such was the reception that met Pierrette Lorrain on her arrival at her cousin's house, while they looked at her with a bewildered air. She was flung on their hands like a parcel, with no transition between the wretched room in which she had lived with her grandparents and her cousins' dining-room, which struck her as palatial. She stood there mute and shy. To any one but these retired haberdashers, the little Bretonne would have been adorable in her frock of coarse blue serge, a pink cotton apron, her blue stockings, thick shoes, and white kerchief; her little red hands were covered by knitted mittens of red wool edged with white that the guard had bought for her. Her little Brittany cap, which had been washed in Paris—it had got tumbled in the course of the journey from Nantes—really looked like a glory round her bright face. This native cap, made of fine cambric, with a stiff lace border ironed into flat pleats, deserves a description, it is so smart and so simple. The light, filtered through the muslin and lace, casts a half shadow, a twilight softness, on the face; it gives it the virginal grace which painters try to find on their palettes, and which Léopold Robert has succeeded in lending to the Raphael-like

face of the woman holding a child in his picture of the "Reapers." Within this setting of broken lights shone an artless rose and white face, beaming with vigorous health. The heat of the room brought the blood to her head, and it suffused the edge of her tiny ears with fire, tinging her lips and the tip of a finely cut nose, while by contrast it made her bright complexion look whiter than before.

"Well, have you nothing to say to us?" said Sylvie. "I am your cousin Sylvie, and that is your cousin Denis."

"Are you hungry?" asked Rogron.

"When did you leave Nantes?" asked Sylvie.

"She is dumb," said Rogron.

"Poor child, she has very few clothes to her back!" observed sturdy Adèle, as she untied the bundle wrapped in a handkerchief belonging to old Lorrain.

"Kiss your cousin," said Sylvie. Pierrette kissed Rogron.

"Yes, kiss your cousin," said Rogron. Pierrette kissed Sylvie.

"She is scared by the journey, poor little thing; perhaps she is sleepy," said Adèle.

Pierrette felt a sudden and invincible aversion for her two relations, a feeling she had never before known. Sylvie and the maid went to put the little girl to bed in the room on the second floor where Brigaut was to see the cotton curtain. There were in this attic a small bed with a pole painted blue, from which hung a cotton curtain, a chest of drawers of walnut wood, with no marble top, a smaller table of the same wood, a looking-glass, a common bed-table, and three wretched chairs. The walls and sloping roof to the front were covered with a cheap blue paper flowered with black. The floor was painted and waxed, and struck cold to the feet. There was no carpet but a thin bedside rug made of selvages. The chimney-shelf, of cheap marble, was graced with a mirror, two candlesticks of copper gilt, and a vulgar alabaster vase with two pigeons drinking to serve as handles; this Sylvie had had in her room in Paris.

"Shall you be comfortable here, child?" asked Sylvie.

"Oh! it is beautiful!" replied the little girl in her silvery treble.

"She is not hard to please," muttered the sturdy peasant woman to herself. "I had better warm the bed, I suppose?" she asked.

"Yes," said Sylvie, "the sheets may be damp."

Adèle brought a head kerchief of her own when she came up with the warming-pan; and Pierrette, who had hitherto slept in sheets of coarse Brittany linen, was amazed at the fine, soft cotton sheets. When the little girl was settled and in bed, Adèle, as she went downstairs, could not help exclaiming, "All her things put together are not worth three francs, Mademoiselle!"

Since adopting her system of strict economy, Sylvie always made the servant sit in the dining-room, so as to have but one lamp and one fire. When Colonel Gouraud and Vinet came Adèle withdrew to her kitchen. Pierrette's arrival kept them talking for the rest of the evening.

"We must get her some clothes to-morrow," said Sylvie. "She has hardly a stitch."

"She has no shoes but those thick ones she had on, and they weigh a pound," said Adèle.

"They wear them so in those parts," said Rogron.

"How she looked at the room, which is none so fine neither, for a cousin of yours, Mademoiselle!"

"So much the better; hold your tongue. You see she is delighted with it."

"Lord above us! what shifts! They must rub her skin raw. But none of these things are of any use," said Adèle, turning out the contents of Pierrette's bundle.

Till ten o'clock master, mistress, and maid were busy deciding of what stuff and at what price the shifts should be made, how many pairs of stockings and of what quality, and how many under-petticoats would be needed, and calculating the cost of Pierrette's wardrobe.

"You will not get off for less than three hundred francs," said Rogron to his sister, as he carried the price of each article

in his head from long practice, and added up the total from memory.

"Three hundred francs!" exclaimed Sylvie.

"Yes, three hundred; work it out yourself."

The brother and sister began again, and made it three hundred francs without the sewing.

"Three hundred francs at one cast of the net!" cried Sylvie, who went to bed on the idea so ingeniously expressed by this proverbial figure of speech.

Pierrette was one of those children of love whom love has blessed with tenderness, cheerfulness, brightness, generosity, and devotedness; nothing had as yet chilled or crushed her heart; it was almost wildly sensitive, and the way she was received by her relations weighed on it painfully. Though Brittany had to her been a home of poverty, it had also been a home of affection. Though the old Lorrains were the most unskilful traders, they were the simplest, most loving, most caressing souls in the world, as all disinterested people are. At Pen-Hoël their little granddaughter had had no teaching but that of nature. Pierrette went as she would in a boat on the pools, she ran about the village or the fields with her companion Jacques Brigaut, exactly like Paul and Virginia. Both the children, spoiled and petted by every one, and as free as the air, ran after the thousand joys of childhood; in summer they went to watch the fishermen, they caught insects, plucked flowers, and gardened; in winter they made slides, built smart snow-palaces and snow-men, or made snow-balls to pelt each other. They were everywhere welcome; everybody smiled on them.

When it was time that they should learn something, misfortunes came. Jacques, left destitute by his father's death, was apprenticed by his relations to a cabinet-maker, and maintained by charity, as Pierrette was soon after in the asylum of Saint-Jacques. But even in this almshouse, pretty little Pierrette had been made much of, loved, and kindly treated by all. The child, thus accustomed to so much affection, no longer found, in the home of these longed-for and wealthy

relations, the look, the tone, the words, the manner which she had hitherto met with in every one, even in the guards of the diligences. Thus her amazement, already great, was complicated by the changed moral atmosphere into which she had been plunged. The heart can turn suddenly cold and hot as the body can. The poor child longed to cry without knowing what for. She was tired, and she fell asleep.

Accustomed to rise very early, like all country-bred children, Pierrette awoke next morning two hours before the cook. She dressed, trotted about her room over her cousin's head, looked out on the little Square, and was going downstairs; she was astonished at the splendor of the staircase; she examined every detail—the rosettes, the brass-work, the moldings, the painting, etc. Then she went down; she could not open the garden door, so she came up again; went down once more when Adèle was about, and sprang into the garden. She took possession of it, ran to the river, was amazed by the summer-house, went into the summer-house; she had enough to see and wonder at in all she saw till her cousin Sylvie was up. During breakfast Sylvie said to her:

"So it was you, little bird, who were trotting up and downstairs at daybreak, and making such a noise? You woke me so completely that I could not get to sleep again. You must be very quiet, very good, and learn to play without making a sound. Your cousin does not like noise?"

"And you must take care about your feet," said Rogron. "You went into the summer-house with muddy shoes, and left your footsteps printed on the floor. Your cousin likes everything to be clean. A great girl like you ought to be cleanly. Were you not taught to be clean in Brittany? To be sure, when I went there to buy flax it was dreadful to see what savages they were!—She has a fine appetite at any rate," said Rogron, turning to his sister; "you might think she had not seen food these three days."

And so, from the very first, Pierrette felt hurt by her cousins' remarks, hurt without knowing why. Her frank

and upright nature, hitherto left to itself, had never been used to reflect; incapable, therefore, of understanding wherein her cousins were wrong, she was doomed to tardy enlightenment through suffering.

After breakfast, the couple, delighted by Pierrette's astonishment, and eager to enjoy it, showed her their fine drawing-room, to teach her to respect its splendor. Unmarried people, as a result of their isolation, and prompted by the craving for something to interest them, are led to supply the place of natural affections by artificial affections—the love of dogs, cats, or canary birds, of their servant or their spiritual director. Thus Rogron and Sylvie had an immoderate affection for the house and furniture that had cost them so much. Sylvie had taken to helping Adèle every morning, being of opinion that the woman did not know how to wipe furniture, to brush it, and make it look like new. This cleaning was soon her constant occupation. Thus, far from diminishing in value, the furniture was improved. Then the problem was to use it without wearing it out, without staining it, without scratching the wood or chilling the polish. This idea ere long became an old maid's monomania. Sylvie kept in a closet woollen rags, wax, varnish, and brushes; she learned to use them as skilfully as a polisher; she had feather brooms and dusters, and she could rub without fear of hurting herself, she was so strong! Her clear, blue eye, as cold and hard as steel, constantly peered under the furniture, and you were more likely to find a tender chord in her heart than a speck of flue under a chair.

After what had passed at Madame Tiphaine's, Sylvie could not possibly shirk the outlay of three hundred francs. During the first week Sylvie was wholly occupied, and Pierrette constantly amused, by the frocks to be ordered and tried on, the shifts and petticoats to be cut out and made by needlewomen working by the day. Pierrette did not know how to sew.

"She has been nicely brought up!" cried Rogron. "Do you know nothing, child?"

Pierrette, who only knew how to love, answered but by a pretty childish shrug.

"What did you do all day in Brittany?" asked Rogron.

"I played," she replied guilelessly. "Everybody played with me. Grandmamma and grandpapa—and everybody told me stories. Oh! they were very fond of me."

"Indeed!" replied Rogron, "and so you lived like a lady."

Pierrette did not understand this tradesman's wit. She opened her eyes wide.

"She is as stupid as a wooden stool," said Sylvie to Mademoiselle Borain, the best workwoman in Provins.

"So young!" said the needlewoman, looking at Pierrette, whose delicate little face looked up at her with a knowing expression.

Pierrette liked the workwomen better than her cousins; she put on pretty airs for them, watched them sewing, said quaint things—the flowers of childhood, such as Rogron and Sylvie had already silenced by fear, for they liked to impress all dependants with a wholesome alarm. The sewing-women were charmed with Pierrette. The outfit, however, was not achieved without some terrible interjections.

"That child will cost us the eyes in our heads!" said Sylvie to Rogron.

"Hold yourself up, child, do. The deuce is in it! the clothes are for you, not for me," said she to Pierrette, when she was being measured or fitted.

"Come, let Mademoiselle Borain do her work; you won't pay her day's wages!" she exclaimed, seeing the child ask the head needlewoman to do something for her.

"Mademoiselle," asked Mademoiselle Borain, "must this seam be back-stitched?"

"Yes; make everything strongly; I do not want to have such a piece of work again in a hurry."

But it was the same with the little cousin as with the house. Pierrette was to be as well dressed as Madame Garceland's little girl. She had fashionable little boots of

bronze kid, like the little Tiphaine girl. She had very fine cotton stockings, stays by the best maker, a frock of blue reps, a pretty cape lined with white silk, all in rivalry with young Madame Julliard's little girl. And the underclothes were as good as the outside show, Sylvie was so much afraid of the keen and scrutinizing eye of the mothers of children. Pierrette had pretty shifts of fine calico. Mademoiselle Borain said that Madame the Sous-préfète's little girls wore cambric drawers with embroidery and frilling—the latest thing, in short; Pierrette had frilled drawers. A charming drawn bonnet was ordered for her of blue velvet lined with white satin, like the little Martener girl's. Thus Pierrette was the smartest little person in Provins. On Sunday, on coming out from church, all the ladies kissed her. Mesdames Tiphaine, Garceland, Galardon, Auffray, Lesourd, Martener, Guépin, and Julliard doted on the sweet little Bretonne. This excitement flattered old Sylvie's vanity, and in her lavishness she thought less of Pierrette than of gratified pride.

However, Sylvie was fated to find offence in her little cousin's success, and this was how it came about: Pierrette was asked out, and, still to triumph over her neighbors, Sylvie allowed her to go. Pierrette was called for to play games and have dolls' dinner-parties with these ladies' children. Pierrette was a much greater success than the Rogrons; Mademoiselle Sylvie was aggrieved that Pierrette was in demand at other houses, but that no one came to see Pierrette at home. The artless child made no secret of her enjoyment at the houses of the Tiphaines, the Marteners, the Galardons, the Julliards, the Lesourds, the Auffrays, and the Garcelands, whose kindness contrasted strangely with the vexatiousness of her cousins. A mother would have been glad of her child's happiness; but the Rogrons had taken Pierrette to please themselves, not to please her; their feelings, far from being paternal, were tainted with egoism and a sort of commercial interest.

The beautiful outfit, the fine Sunday clothes, and the

everyday frocks began Pierrette's misfortunes. Like all children free to amuse themselves and accustomed to follow the dictates of fancy, she wore out her shoes, boots, and frocks with frightful rapidity, and, above all, her frilled drawers. A mother when she scolds her child thinks of the child only; she is only hard when driven to extremities, and when the child is in the wrong; but in this great clothes question, the cousins' money was the first consideration; that was the real point, and not Pierrette. Children have a dog-like instinct for discerning injustice in those who rule them; they feel without fail whether they are tolerated or loved. Innocent hearts are more alive to shades than to contrasts; a child that does not yet understand evil knows when you offend the sense of beauty bestowed on it by nature. The lessons that Pierrette brought upon herself as to the behavior of a well-bred young lady, as to modesty and economy, were the corollary of this main idea—"Pierrette is ruining us."

These scoldings, which had a fatal issue for Pierrette, led the old couple back into the familiar commercial ruts from which their home-life at Provins had led them to wander, and in which their nature could expand and blossom. After being used to domineer, to make remarks, to give orders, to scold their clerks, sharply, Rogron and his sister were perishing for lack of victims. Small natures require despotism to exercise their sinews, as great souls thirst for equality to give play to their heart. Now narrow minds can develop as well through persecution as through benevolence; they can assure themselves of their power by tyrannizing cruelly or beneficently over others; they go the way their nature guides them. Add to this the guidance of interest, and you will have the key to most social riddles. Pierrette now became very necessary to her cousins' existence. Since her arrival the Rogrons had been absorbed in her outfit, and then attracted by the novelty of companionship. Every new thing, a feeling, or even a tyranny, must form its set, its creases. Sylvie began by calling Pierrette "my child"; she

gave up "my child" for "Pierrette" unqualified. Her reproofs, at first sourly gentle, became hard and sharp. As soon as they had started on this road, the brother and sister made rapid progress. They were no longer dull. It was not a deliberate scheme of malice and cruelty; it was the instinct of unreasoning tyranny. They believed that they were doing good to Pierrette, as of old to their apprentices.

Pierrette, whose sensitiveness was genuine, noble, and overstrung, the very antipodes of the Rogrons' aridity, had a horror of being blamed; it struck her so cruelly that tears rose at once to her large, clear eyes. She had a hard struggle to suppress her engaging liveliness, which charmed every one out of the house. She might indulge it before the mothers of her little friends; but at home, by the end of the first month, she began to sit silent, and Rogron asked her if she were ill. At this strange question she flew off to the bottom of the garden to cry by the river, into which her tears fell, as she was one day to fall in the torrent of society.

One day, in spite of her care, the little girl tore her best reps frock at Madame Tiphaine's, where she had gone to play one fine day. She at once burst into tears, foreseeing the scolding that awaited her at home. On being questioned, she let fall a few words about her terrible cousin Sylvie in the midst of her tears. Pretty Madame Tiphaine had some stuff to match, and she herself put in a new front breadth. Mademoiselle Rogron heard of the trick, as she called it, played on her by that limb of a little girl. From that day she would never let Pierrette visit any of the ladies.

The new life which Pierrette was to lead at Provins was fated to fall into three very distinct phases. The first lasted three months, during which she enjoyed a kind of happiness, divided between the old people's cold caresses, and the scoldings, which she found scorching. The prohibition that kept her from seeing her little friends, emphasizing the necessity for beginning to learn everything that a well-brought-up girl should know, put an end to the first phase

of Pierrette's life at Provins, the only period when she found existence endurable.

The domestic changes produced at the Rogrons' house by Pierrette's residence there were studied by Vinet and the Colonel with the cunning of a fox bent on getting into a fowl-house, and uneasy at discovering a new creature on the scene. They both paid calls at long intervals, so as not to scare Mademoiselle Sylvie; they found various excuses for chatting with Rogron, and made themselves masters of the situation with an air of reserve and dignity that the great Tartufe might have admired. The Colonel and the lawyer spent at the Rogrons the evening of the very day when Sylvie had refused, in very harsh terms, to let Pierrette go to Madame Tiphaine's. On hearing of her refusal, the Colonel and the lawyer looked at each other as folks who knew their Provins.

"She positively tried to make a fool of you?" said the lawyer. "We warned Rogron long ago of what has now happened. There is no good to be got out of those people."

"What can you expect of the Anti-National Party?" cried the Colonel, curling up his mustache and interrupting Vinet. "If we had tried to get you away from them, you might have thought that we had some malicious motive for speaking to you so. But why, Mademoiselle, if you are fond of a little game, should you not play boston in the evenings at home in your own house? Is it impossible to find any one in the place of such idiots as the Julliards? Vinet and I play boston; we will find a fourth. Vinet might introduce his wife to you; she is very nice, and she is one of the Chargebœufs. You will not be like those apes in the upper town; you will not expect a good little housewife, who is compelled by her family's disgraceful conduct to do all her own house-work, to dress like a duchess—and she has the courage of a lion and the gentleness of a lamb."

Sylvie Rogron displayed her long yellow teeth in a smile

at the Colonel, who endured the horrible phenomenon very well, and even assumed a flattering air.

"If there are but four of us, we cannot play boston every evening," replied she.

"Why, where else have I to go—an old soldier like me who has nothing to do, and lives on his pensions? The lawyer is free every evening. Besides, you will have company, I promise you," he added, with a mysterious air.

"You have only to declare yourselves frankly opposed to the Ministerial party in Provins, and hold your own against them," said Vinet. "You would see how popular you would be in Provins; you would have a great many people on your side. You would make the Tiphaines furious by having an Opposition salon. Well, then, let us laugh at others, if others laugh at us. The 'clique' do not spare you, I can tell you."

"What do they say?" asked Sylvie.

In country towns there is always more than one safety-valve by which gossip finds a vent from one set into another. Vinet had heard all that had been said about the Rogrons in the drawing-rooms from which the haberdashers had been definitively banished. The supernumerary judge Desfondrilles, the archæologist, was of neither party. This man, like some other independent members of society, repeated everything he heard, out of provincial habit, and Vinet had had the benefit of his chit-chat. The malicious lawyer repeated Madame Tiphaine's pleasantries with added venom. As he revealed the practical jokes of which Sylvie and Rogron had been the unconscious victims, he stirred the rage and aroused the revengeful spirit of these two arid souls, craving some aliment for their mean passions.

A few days later Vinet brought his wife, a well-bred woman, shy, neither plain nor pretty, very meek, and very conscious of her misfortune. Madame Vinet was fair, rather worn by the cares of her penurious housekeeping, and very simply dressed. No woman could have better pleased Sylvie. Madame Vinet put up with Sylvie's airs, and gave way to her

like a woman accustomed to give way. On her round forehead, her rose-pink cheeks, in her slow, gentle eyes, there were traces of those deep reflections, that clear-sighted thoughtfulness, which women who are used to suffering bury under perfect silence. The influence of the Colonel, displaying for Sylvie's behoof *courtieresque* graces that seemed wrung from his soldierly roughness, with that of the wily Vinet, soon made itself felt by Pierrette. The child, the pretty squirrel, shut up in the house, or going out only with old Sylvie, was every instant checked by a "Don't touch that, Pierrette!" and by incessant sermons on holding herself up. Pierrette stooped and held her shoulders high; her cousin wanted her to be as straight as herself, and she was like a soldier presenting arms to his Colonel; she would sometimes give her little slaps on her back to make her hold herself up. The free and light-hearted child of the Marais learned to measure her movements and imitate an automaton.

One evening, which marked the beginning of the second period, Pierrette, whom the three visitors had not seen in the drawing-room during the evening, came to kiss her cousins and courtesy to the company before going to bed. Sylvie coldly offered her cheek to the pretty little thing, as if to be kissed and have done with it. The action was so cruelly significant that tears started from Pierrette's eyes.

"Have you pricked yourself, my little Pierrette," said the abominable Vinet.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Sylvie severely.

"Nothing," said the poor child, going to kiss Rogron.

"Nothing?" repeated Sylvie. "You cannot be crying for nothing!"

"What is it, my little pet?" said Madame Vinet.

"My rich cousin Sylvie does not treat me so well as my poor grandmother!"

"Your grandmother stole your money," said Sylvie, "and your cousin will leave you hers."

The Colonel and Vinet exchanged covert glances.

"I would rather be robbed and loved," said Pierrette.

"Very well, you shall be sent back to the place you came from."

"But what has the dear child done?" asked Madame Vinet.

Vinet fixed his eye on his wife, with that terrible cold, fixed stare that belongs to those who rule despotically. The poor lonely woman, unceasingly punished for not having the one thing required of her—namely, a fortune—took up her cards again.

"What has she done?" cried Sylvie, raising her head with a jerk so sudden that the yellow wallflowers in her cap were shaken. "She does not know what to do next to annoy us. She opened my watch to examine the works, and touched the wheel, and broke the mainspring. Madame listens to nothing. All day long I am telling her to take care what she is about, and I might as well talk to the lamp."

Pierrette, ashamed of being reprimanded in the presence of strangers, went out of the room very gently.

"I cannot think how to quell that child's turbulence," said Rogron.

"Why, she is old enough to go to school," said Madame Vinet.

Another look from Vinet silenced his wife, to whom he had been careful not to confide his plans and the Colonel's with regard to the bachelor couple.

"That is what comes of taking charge of other people's children," cried Gouraud. "You might have some of your own yet, you or your brother; why do you not both marry?"

Sylvie looked very sweetly at the Colonel; for the first time in her life she beheld a man to whom the idea that she might marry did not seem absurd.

"Madame Vinet is right!" cried Rogron, "that would keep Pierrette quiet. A master would not cost much."

The Colonel's speech so entirely occupied Sylvie that she did not answer her brother.

"If only you would stand the money for the Opposition

paper we were talking about, you might find a tutor for your little cousin in the responsible editor. We could get that poor schoolmaster who was victimized by the encroachments of the priests. My wife is right; Pierrette is a rough diamond that needs polishing," said Vinet to Rogron.

"I fancied that you were a Baron," said Sylvie to the Colonel, after a long pause, while each player seemed meditative.

"Yes. But having won the title in 1814, after the battle of Nangis, where my regiment did wonders, how could I find the money or the assistance needed to get it duly registered? The barony, like the rank of general, which I won in 1815, must wait for a revolution to secure them to me."

"If you could give a mortgage as your guarantee for the money," said Rogron presently, "I could do it."

"That could be arranged with Cournant," replied Vinet. "The newspaper would lead to the Colonel's triumph, and make your drawing-room more powerful than those of Tiphaine and Co."

"How is that?" asked Sylvie.

At this moment, while Madame Vinet was dealing, and the lawyer explaining all the importance that the publication of an independent paper for the district of Provins must confer on Rogron, the Colonel, and himself, Pierrette was bathed in tears. Her heart and brain were agreed; she thought Sylvie far more to blame than herself. The little Bretonne instinctively perceived how unfailing charity and benevolence should be. She hated her fine frocks and all that was done for her. She paid too dear for these benefits. She cried with rage at having given her cousins a hold over her, and determined to behave in such a way as to reduce them to silence, poor child! Then she saw how noble Brigaut had been to give her his savings. She thought her woes had reached a climax, not knowing that at that moment new misfortunes were being plotted in the drawing-room.

A few days later, Pierrette had a writing-master. She was to learn to read, write, and do sums. Pierrette's educa-

tion involved the house of Rogron in fearful disaster. There was ink on the tables, on the furniture, and on her clothes; writing-books and pens strewn everywhere, powder on the upholstery, books torn and dog's-eared while she was learning her lessons. They already spoke to her—and in what a way! —of the necessity for earning her living and being a burden on no one. As she heard these dreadful warnings, Pierrette felt a burning in her throat; she was choking, her heart beat painfully fast. She was obliged to swallow down her tears; for each one was reckoned with as an offence against her magnanimous relations. Rogron had found the occupation that suited him. He scolded Pierrette as he had formerly scolded his shopmen; he would fetch her in from the midst of her play to compel her to study; he heard her repeat her lessons; he was the poor child's fierce tutor. Sylvie, on her part, thought it her duty to teach Pierrette the little she knew of womanly accomplishments.

Neither Rogron nor his sister had any gentleness of nature. These narrow souls, finding a real pleasure in bullying the poor little thing, changed unconsciously from mildness to the greatest severity. This severity was, they said, the consequence of the child's obstinacy; she had begun too late to learn, and was dull of apprehension. Her teachers did not understand the art of giving lessons in a form suited to the pupil's intelligence, which is what should distinguish private from public education. The fault lay far less with Pierrette than with her cousins. It took her an immensely long time to learn the beginnings. For the merest trifle she was called stupid and silly, foolish and awkward. Incessantly ill used by hard words, Pierrette never met any but cold looks from the two old people. She fell into the stolid dulness of a sheep; she dared do nothing when she found her actions misjudged, misunderstood, misinterpreted. In everything she awaited Sylvie's orders, and the expression of her cousin's will, keeping her thoughts to herself and shutting herself up in passive obedience. Her bright color began to fade. Sometimes she complained of aches and

pains. When Sylvie asked her, Where? the poor child, who felt generally ailing, replied, "All over."

"Was ever such a thing heard of as aching all over? If you were ill all over, you would be dead!" retorted Sylvie.

"You may have a pain in your chest," said Rogron the expositor, "or in your teeth, or your head, or your feet, or your stomach, but no one ever had pains everywhere. What do you mean by 'all over'? Pain all over is pain nowhere. Do you know what you are doing? You are talking for talking's sake."

Pierrette at last never spoke, finding that her artless girlish remarks, the flowers of her opening mind, were met with commonplace retorts which her good sense told her were ridiculous.

"You are always complaining, and you eat like a fasting friar!" said Rogron.

The only person who never distressed this sweet fragile flower was the sturdy servant Adèle. Adèle always warmed the little girl's bed, but in secret, since one evening when, being discovered in the act of thus "spoiling" her master's heiress, she was scolded by Sylvie.

"Children must be hardened; that is the way to give them strong constitutions. Have we been any the worse for it, my brother and I?" said Sylvie. "You will make Pierrette a peeky coddle!"—*une picheline*, a word of the Rogron vocabulary to designate weakly and complaining persons.

The little angel's caressing expressions were regarded as mere acting. The roses of affection that budded so fresh and lovely in this young soul, and longed to open to the day, were mercilessly crushed. Pierrette felt the hardest blows on the tenderest spots of her heart. If she tried to soften these two savage natures by her pretty ways, she was accused of expressing her tenderness out of self-interest. "Tell me plainly what you want," Rogron would exclaim roughly; "you are certainly not coaxing me for nothing."

Neither the sister nor the brother recognized affection, and Pierrette was all affection.

Colonel Gouraud, anxious to please Mademoiselle Rogron, declared her right in all that concerned Pierrette. Vinet no less supported the old cousins in their abuse of Pierrette; he ascribed all the reported misdeeds of this angel to the obstinacy of the Breton character, and said that no power, no strength of will, could ever conquer it. Rogron and his sister were flattered with the utmost skill by these two courtiers, who had at last succeeded in extracting from Rogron the surety money for the newspaper, the "Provins Courrier," and from Sylvie five thousand francs, as a shareholder. The Colonel and Vinet now took the field. They disposed of a hundred shares at five hundred francs each to the electors who held State securities, and whom the Liberal journals filled with alarms, to farmers, and to persons who were called independent. They even extended their ramifications over the whole department, and beyond it, to some adjacent townships. Each shareholder subscribed for the paper, of course. Then the legal and other advertisements were divided between the "Ruche" and the "Courrier." The first number contained a grandiloquent column in praise of Rogron, who was represented as the Laffitte of Provins.

As soon as the public mind found a leader, it became easy to perceive that the coming elections would be hotly contested. Madame Tiphaine was in despair.

"Unfortunately," said she, as she read an article attacking her and Monsieur Julliard, "unfortunately, I forgot that there is always a rogue not far away from a dupe, and that folly always attracts a clever man of the fox species."

As soon as the newspaper was to be seen for twenty leagues round, Vinet had a new coat and boots, and a decent waistcoat and trousers. He displayed the famous white hat affected by Liberals, and showed his collar and cuffs. His wife engaged a servant, and appeared dressed as became the wife of an influential man; she wore pretty caps.

Vinet, out of self-interest, was grateful. He and his friend

Cournant, notary to the Liberal side, and Auffray's opponent, became the Rogrons' advisers, and did them two great services. The leases granted by old Rogron, their father, in 1815, under unfortunate circumstances, were about to fall in. Horticulture and market-gardening had lately developed enormously in the Provins district. The pleader and the notary made it their business to effect an increase of fourteen hundred francs a year on granting the new leases. Vinet also won for them two lawsuits against two villages, relating to plantations of trees, in which the loss of five hundred poplars was involved. The money for the poplars, with the Rogrons' savings, which for the last three years had amounted to six thousand francs deposited at compound interest, was skilfully laid out in the purchase of several plots of land. Finally, Vinet proposed and carried out the eviction of certain peasant proprietors, to whom Rogron the elder had loaned money, and who had killed themselves with cultivating and manuring their land to enable them to repay it, but in vain.

Thus the damage done to the Rogrons' capital by the reconstruction of their house was to a great extent remedied. Their estates in the immediate neighborhood of the town, chosen by their father as innkeepers know how to choose, cut up into small holdings of which the largest was less than five acres, and let to perfectly solvent tenants, themselves owners of some plots of land mortgaged to secure the farm rents, brought in at Martinmas, in November, 1826, five thousand francs. The taxes were paid by the tenants, and there were no buildings to repair or insure against fire.

The brother and sister each possessed four thousand six hundred francs in the five per cents; and as their selling value was above par, Vinet exhorted them to invest the money in land, promising them—seconded by the notary—that they should not lose a farthing of interest by the transfer.

By the end of this second period, life was so intolerable to Pierrette—the indifference of all about her, the senseless

fault-finding and lack of affection in her cousins became so virulent, she felt so plainly the cold chill of the tomb blowing upon her—that she entertained the daring project of going away, on foot, with no money, to Brittany to rejoin her grandfather and grandmother. Two events prevented this: Old Lorrain died, and Rogron was appointed Pierrette's guardian by a family council held at Provins. If her old grandmother had died first, it is probable that Rogron, advised by Vinet, would have called upon the grandfather to repay the child's eight thousand francs, and have reduced him to beggary.

"Why, you may inherit Pierrette's money," said Vinet with a hideous smile. "You never can tell who will live or who will die."

Enlightened by this speech, Rogron left the widow Lorrain no peace as Pierrette's debtor till he had made her secure to the little girl the capital of the eight thousand francs by a deed of gift, of which he paid the cost.

Pierrette was strangely affected by this loss. Just as the blow fell on her she was to be prepared for her first Communion, the other event which by its obligations tied her to Provins. This necessary and simple ceremony was to bring about great changes for the Rogrons. Sylvie learned that the curé, Monsieur Péroux, was instructing the little Julliards, the Lesourds, Garcelands, and others. She made it therefore a point of honor to put Pierrette under the guidance of the Abbé Péroux's superior, Monsieur Habert, a man who was said to belong to the Jesuit Congregation—very zealous for the interests of the Church, much dreaded in Provins, and hiding immense ambition under the strictest severity of principle. This priest's sister, an unmarried woman of about thirty, had a school for girls in the town. The brother and sister were much alike; both lean, sallow, atrabilious, with black hair.

Pierrette, a Bretonne nurtured in the practice and poetry of the Catholic faith, opened her heart and ears to the teaching of this imposing priest. Suffering predisposes the mind

to devoutness; and most young girls, prompted by instinctive tenderness, lean toward mysticism, the obscurer side of religion. So the priest sowed the seed of the Gospel and the dogmas of the Church in good ground. He completely changed Pierrette's frame of mind. Pierrette loved Jesus Christ as presented to girls in the Sacrament, as a celestial bridegroom; her moral and physical sufferings now had their meaning; she was taught to see the hand of God in everything. Her soul, so cruelly stricken in this house, while she could not accuse her cousins, took refuge in the sphere whither fly all who are wretched, borne on the wings of the three Christian virtues. She gave up the idea of flight. Sylvie, amazed at the alteration produced in Pierrette by Monsieur Habert, became curious. And so, while preparing the child for her first Communion, Monsieur Habert won to God the hitherto wandering soul of Mademoiselle Sylvie. Sylvie became a bigot.

Denis Rogron, over whom the supposed Jesuit could get no hold—for at that time the spirit of his late lamented Majesty Constitution the First was in some simpletons supreme above that of the Church—Denis remained faithful to Colonel Gouraud, Vinet, and Liberalism.

Mademoiselle Rogron, of course, made acquaintance with Mademoiselle Habert, with whom she was in perfect sympathy. The two old maids loved each other like two loving sisters. Mademoiselle Habert proposed to take Pierrette under her care, and spare Sylvie the trouble and vexations of educating a child; but the brother and sister replied that Pierrette's absence would make the house feel too empty. The Rogrons' attachment to their little cousin seemed excessive.

On seeing Mademoiselle Habert in possession, Colonel Gouraud and Vinet ascribed to the ambitious priest, on his sister's behalf, the matrimonial scheme imagined by the Colonel.

"Your sister wants to see you married," said the lawyer to the ex-haberdasher.

"And to whom?" said Rogron.

"To that old sibyl of a schoolmistress," cried the Colonel, curling his mustache.

"She has said nothing to me about it," said Rogron blankly.

A woman so determined as Sylvie was sure to make great progress in the ways of salvation. The priest's influence soon grew in the house, supported as it was by Sylvie, who managed her brother. The two Liberals, very legitimately alarmed, understood that if the priest had determined to get Rogron for his sister's husband—a far more suitable match than that of Sylvie and the Colonel—he would urge Sylvie to the excessive practice of religion, and make Pierrette go into a convent. They would thus lose the reward of eighteen months of efforts, meanness, and flattery. They took a terrible dumb hatred of the priest and his sister, and yet, if they were to keep up with them step for step, they felt the necessity of remaining on good terms with them.

Monsieur and Mademoiselle Habert, who played both whist and boston, came every evening. Their assiduity excited that of the others. The lawyer and the soldier felt that they were pitted against adversaries stronger than themselves, a preconception which Monsieur Habert and his sister fully shared. This situation was in itself a battle. Just as the Colonel gave to Sylvie a foretaste of the unhoped-for joys of an offer of marriage—for she had brought herself to regard Gouraud as a man worthy of her—so Mademoiselle Habert wrapped the retired haberdasher in the cotton wool of her attentions, her speeches, and her looks. Neither party could say to itself the great word of great politicians, "Divide the spoil!" each insisted on the whole prize.

Besides, the two wily foxes of the Opposition at Provins —an Opposition that was growing in strength—were rash enough to believe themselves stronger than the Priesthood; they were the first to fire. Vinet, whose gratitude was stirred up by the claw-fingers of self-interest, went to fetch Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf and her mother. The two women,

who had about two thousand francs a year, lived very narrowly at Troyes. Mademoiselle Bathilde de Chargebœuf was one of those splendid women who believe in marrying for love, and change their minds toward their five-and-twentieth year on finding themselves still unwedded. Vinet succeeded in persuading Madame de Chargebœuf to combine her two thousand francs with the thousand crowns he was making now that the newspaper was started, and to come and live with him at Provins, where Bathilde, he said, might marry a simpleton named Rogron, and, so clever as she was, rival handsome Madame Tiphaine.

The reinforcement of Vinet's household and ideas by the arrival of Madame and Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf gave the utmost cohesion to the Liberal party. This coalition brought consternation to the aristocracy of Provins and the Tiphaine party. Madame de Bréautey, in dismay at seeing two women of family so misled, begged them to come to see her. She bewailed the blunders committed by the Royalists, and was furious with those of Troyes on learning the poverty of this mother and daughter.

"What! was there no old country gentleman who would marry that dear girl, born to rule a chateau?" cried she. "They have let her run to seed, and now she will throw herself at the head of a Rogron!"

She hunted the department through, and failed to find one gentleman who would marry a girl whose mother had but two thousand francs a year. Then the "clique" of the Tiphaines and the Sous-préfet also set to work, but too late, to discover such a man. Madame de Bréautey inveighed loudly against the selfishness that was eating up France, the result of materialism and of the power conferred on money by the laws; the nobility was nothing in these days! Beauty was nothing! Rogrons and Vinets were defying the King of France!

Bathilde had the indisputable advantage over her rival not merely of beauty, but of dress. She was dazzlingly fair. At five-and-twenty her fully-developed shoulders and splen-

did modelling were exquisitely full. The roundness of her throat, the slenderness of her articulations, the splendor of her fine fair hair, the charm of her smile, the elegant shape of her head, the dignity and outline of her face, her fine eyes under a well-molded brow, her calm and well-bred movements, and her still girlish figure, all were in harmony. She had a fine hand and a narrow foot. Her robust health gave her, perhaps, the look of a handsome inn-servant; "but that should be no fault in a Rogron's eyes," said pretty Madame Tiphaine.

The first time Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf was seen she was dressed simply enough. Her dress of brown merino, edged with green embroidery, was cut low; but a kerchief of tulle, neatly drawn down by invisible strings, covered her shoulders, back, and bust, a little open at the throat, though fastened by a brooch and chain. Under this fine network Bathilde's beauty was even more attractive, more suggestive. She took off her velvet bonnet and her shawl on entering, and showed pretty ears with gold eardrops. She had a little cross and heart on black velvet round her neck, which contrasted with its whiteness like the black that fantastic nature sets round the tail of a white Angora cat. She was expert in all the arts of girls on their promotion: twisting her fingers to arrange curls that are not out of place, displaying her wrists by begging Rogron to button her cuff, which the hapless man, quite dazzled, bluntly refused to do, hiding his agitation under assumed indifference. The bashfulness of the only passion our haberdasher was ever to know in his life always gave it the demeanor of hatred. Sylvie, as well as Céleste Habert, misunderstood it; not so the lawyer, the superior man of this company of simpletons, whose only enemy was the priest, for the Colonel had long been his ally.

Gouraud, on his part, thenceforth behaved to Sylvie as Bathilde did to Rogron. He appeared in clean linen every evening; he wore velvet collars, which gave effect to his martial countenance, set off by the corners of his white

shirt collar; he adopted white drill waistcoats, and had a new frockcoat made of blue cloth, on which his red rosette was conspicuous, and all under pretence of doing honor to the fair Bathilde. He never smoked after two o'clock. His grizzled hair was brushed down in a wave over his ochre-colored skull. In short, he assumed the appearance and attitude of a party chief, of a man who was prepared to rout the enemies of France—in one word, the Bourbons—with tuck of drum.

The Satanical pleader and the cunning Colonel played a still more cruel trick on Monsieur and Mademoiselle Habert than that of introducing the beautiful Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf, who was pronounced by the Liberal party and by the Bréauteys to be ten times handsomer than the beautiful Madame Tiphaine. These two great country-town politicians had it rumored from one to another that Monsieur Habert agreed with them on all points. Provins before long spoke of him as a "Liberal priest." Called up before the Bishop, Monsieur Habert was obliged to give up his evenings with the Rogrons, but his sister still went there. Thenceforth the Rogron drawing-room was a fact and a power.

And so, by the middle of that year, political intrigues were not less eager than matrimonial intrigues in the Rogrons' rooms. While covert interests, buried out of sight, were fighting wildly for the upper hand, the public struggle won disastrous notoriety. Everybody knows that the Villèle ministry was overthrown by the elections of 1826. In the Provins constituency, Vinet, the Liberal candidate—for whom Monsieur Cournant had obtained his qualification by the purchase of some land of which the price remained unpaid—came very near beating Monsieur Tiphaine. The President had a majority of only two.

Mesdames Vinet and de Chargebœuf, Vinet and the Colonel were sometimes joined by Monsieur Cournant and his wife; then by Néraud the doctor, a man whose youth had been very "stormy," but who now took serious views of

life; he had devoted himself to science, it was said, and if the Liberals were to be believed, was a far cleverer man than Monsieur Martener. To the Rogrons their triumph was as inexplicable as their ostracism had been.

The handsome Bathilde de Chargebœuf, to whom Vinet spoke of Pierrette as an enemy, was horribly disdainful to the child. The humiliation of this poor victim was necessary to the interest of all. Madame Vinet could do nothing for the little girl who was being brayed in the mortar of the pitiless egotisms which the lady at last understood. But for her husband's imperative desire she would never have come to the Rogrons; it grieved her too much to see their ill-usage of the pretty little thing who clung to her, understanding her secret goodwill, and begged her to teach her such or such a stitch or embroidery pattern. Pierrette had shown that when she was thus treated she understood and succeeded to admiration. But Madame Vinet was no longer of any use, so she came no more.

Sylvie, who still cherished the notion of marriage, now regarded Pierrette as an obstacle. Pierrette was nearly fourteen; her sickly fairness, a symptom that was quite overlooked by the ignorant old maid, made her lovely Then Sylvie had the bright idea of indemnifying herself for the expenses caused by Pierrette by making a servant of her. Vinet, as representing the interests of the Chargebœufs, Mademoiselle Habert, Gouraud, all the influential visitors, advised Sylvie by all means to dismiss Adèle. Could not Pierrette cook and keep the house in order? When there was too much to be done, she need only engage the Colonel's housekeeper, a very accomplished person, and one of the best cooks in Provins. Pierrette ought to learn to cook and to polish the floors, said the baleful lawyer, to sweep, keep the house neat, go to market, and know the price of things. The poor little girl, whose unselfishness was as great as her generosity, offered it herself, glad to pay thus for the hard bread she ate under that roof.

Adèle went. Thus Pierrette lost the only person who,

might perhaps have protected her. Strong as she was, from that hour she was crushed body and soul. The old people had less mercy on her than on a servant; she was their property! She was scolded for mere nothings, for a little dust left on the corner of a chimney-shelf or a glass shade. These objects of luxury that she had so much admired became odious to her. In spite of her anxiety to do right, her relentless cousin Sylvie always found some fault with everything she did. In two years Pierrette never heard a word of praise or of affection. Her whole happiness consisted in not being scolded. She submitted with angelic patience to the dark moods of these two unmarried beings, to whom the gentler feelings were all unknown, and who made her suffer every day from her dependency. This life in which the young girl was gripped, as it were, between the two haberdashers as in the jaws of a vise, increased her malady. She had such violent fits of inexplicable distress, such sudden bursts of secret grief, that her physical development was irremediably checked. And thus, by slow degrees, through terrible though concealed sufferings, Pierrette had come to the state in which the friend of her childhood had seen her as he stood on the little Square and greeted her with his Breton ballad.

Before entering on the story of the domestic drama in the Rogrons' house, to which Brigaut's arrival gave rise, it will be necessary, to avoid digressions, to account for the lad's settling at Provins, since he is in some sort a silent personage on the stage.

Brigaut, as he fled, was alarmed not merely by Pierrette's signal, but also by the change in his little friend; hardly could he recognize her, but for the voice, eyes, and movements which recalled his lively little playfellow, at once so gay and so loving. When he had got far away from the house, his legs quaked under him, his spine felt on fire! He had seen the shadow of Pierrette, and not Pierrette herself. He made his way up to the old town thoughtful and

uneasy, till he found a spot whence he could see the Place and the house where Pierrette lived; he gazed at it sadly, lost in thought as infinite as the troubles into which we plunge without knowing where they may end. Pierrette was ill; she was unhappy; she regretted Brittany! What ailed her? All these questions passed again and again through Brigaut's mind, and racked his breast, revealing to him the extent of his affection for his little adopted sister.

It is very rarely that a passion between two children of different sexes remains permanent. The charming romance of Paul and Virginia no more solves the problem of this strange moral fact than does that of Brigaut and Pierrette. Modern history offers the single illustrious exception of the sublime Marchesa di Pescara and her husband, who, destined for each other by their parents at the age of fourteen, adored each other, and were married. Their union gave to the sixteenth century the spectacle of boundless conjugal affection, never clouded. The Marchesa, a widow at four-and-thirty, beautiful, witty, universally beloved, refused monarchs, and buried herself in a convent, where she never saw, never heard, any one but nuns.

Such perfect love as this blossomed suddenly in the heart of the poor Breton artisan. Pierrette and he had so often been each other's protectors, he had been so happy in giving her the money for her journey, he had almost died of running after the diligence, and Pierrette had not known it! The memory of it had often warmed him during the chill hours of his toilsome life these three years past. He had improved himself for Pierrette; he had learned his craft for Pierrette; he had come to Paris for Pierrette, intending to make a fortune for her. After being there a fortnight, he could no longer control his longing to see her; he had walked from Saturday evening till Monday morning. He had intended to return to Paris, but the pathetic appearance of his little friend held him fast to Provins. A wonderful magnetism—still disputed, it is true, in spite of so many instances—acted on him without his knowing it; and tears

filled his eyes, while they also dimmed Pierrette's sight. If to her he was Brittany and all her happy childhood, to him Pierrette was life! At sixteen Brigaut had not yet learned to draw or give the section of a molding; there were many things he did not know; but at piecework he had earned from four to five francs a day. So he could live at Provins; he would be within reach of Pierrette; he would finish learning his business by working under the best cabinet-maker in the town, and watch over the little girl.

Brigaut made up his mind at once. He flew back to Paris, settled his accounts, collected his pass, his luggage, and his tools. Three days later he was working for Monsieur Frappier, the best carpenter in Provins. Energetic workmen, steady, and averse to turbulency and taverns, are rare enough to make a master glad to get a young fellow like Brigaut. To conclude his story on that score, by the end of a fortnight he was foreman, lodging and boarding with Frappier, who taught him arithmetic and linear drawing. The carpenter lived in the High Street, about a hundred yards from the little oblong Place, at the end of which stood the Rogrons' house.

Brigaut buried his love in his heart, and was not guilty of the smallest indiscretion. He got Madame Frappier to tell him the history of the Rogrons; from her he learned how the old innkeeper had set to work to get the money left by old Auffray. Brigaut was fully informed as to the character of the haberdasher and his sister. One morning he met Pierrette at market with Mademoiselle Sylvie, and shuddered to see her with a basket on her arm full of provisions. He went to see Pierrette again at church on Sunday, where the girl appeared in all her best; there, for the first time, Brigaut understood that Pierrette was Mademoiselle Lorrain.

Pierrette saw her friend, but she made him a mysterious signal to keep himself out of sight. There was a world of meaning in this gesture, as in that by which, a fortnight since, she had bidden him vanish. What a fortune he

would have to make in ten years to enable him to marry the companion of his childhood, to whom the Rogrons would leave a house, a hundred acres of land, and twelve thousand francs a year, not to mention their savings! The persevering Breton would not tempt fortune till he had acquired the knowledge he still lacked. So long as it was theory alone, it was all the same whether he learned in Paris or at Provins, and he preferred to remain near Pierrette, to whom he also proposed to explain his plans and the sort of help she might count on. Finally, he would certainly not leave her till he understood the secret of the pallor which had already dimmed the life of the feature which generally retains it longest—the eyes; till he knew what caused the sufferings that gave her the look of a girl bowing before the scythe of Death, and about to be cut down.

Her two pathetic signals, which were not false to their friendship, but which enjoined the greatest caution, struck terror into the lad's heart. Evidently Pierrette desired him to wait, and not to try to see her, or there would be danger and peril for her. As she came out of church she gave him a look, and Brigaut saw that her eyes were full of tears. The Breton would more easily have squared the circle than have guessed what had happened in the Rogrons' house since his arrival.

It was not without lively apprehensions that Pierrette came down from her room that day when Brigaut had plunged into her morning dream like another dream. Having risen and opened her window, Mademoiselle Rogron must have heard the song and its words—compromising, no doubt, in the ears of an old maid; but Pierrette knew nothing of the causes that made her cousin so alert. Sylvie had good reasons for getting up and running to the window. For about a week past strange secret events and cruel pangs of feeling had agitated the principal figures in the Rogron *salon*. These unknown events, carefully con-

cealed by all concerned, were to fall on Pierrette like an icy avalanche.

The realm of mysteries, which ought perhaps to be called the foul places of the human heart, lies at the bottom of the greatest revolutions, political, social, or domestic; but in speaking of them it may be extremely useful to explain that their algebraical expression, though accurate, is not faithful so far as form is concerned. These deep calculations do not express themselves so brutally as history reports them. Any attempt to relate the circumlocutions, the rhetorical involutions, the long colloquies, in which the mind designedly darkens the light it casts, the honeyed words diluting the venom of certain insinuations, would mean writing a book as long as the noble poem called "Clarissa Harlowe."

Mademoiselle Habert and Mademoiselle Rogron were equally desirous of marrying; but one was ten years younger than the other, and probability allowed Céleste Habert to think that her children would inherit the Rogrons' whole fortune. Sylvie was almost forty-two, an age at which marriage has its risks. In confiding their ideas to each other to secure mutual approbation, Céleste Habert, on a hint from the vindictive Abbé, had enlightened Sylvie as to the possibilities of the position. The Colonel, a violent man, with the health of a soldier, a burly bachelor of forty-five, would no doubt act on the moral of all fairy tales: they lived happy, and had many children. This form of happiness alarmed Sylvie; she was afraid of dying—a fear which tortures unmarried women to the utmost.

But the Martignac ministry was now established—the second victory which upset the Villèle administration. Vinet's party held their head high in Provins. Vinet, now the leading advocate of la Brie, carried all before him, to use a colloquialism. Vinet was a personage; the Liberals prophesied his advancement; he would certainly be a deputy or public prosecutor. As to the Colonel, he would be Mayor of Provins. Oh! to reign as Madame Garceland reigned, to be the Mayoress! Sylvie could not resist this hope; she deter-

mined to consult a doctor, though it might cover her with ridicule. The two women, one triumphant, and the other sure of having her in leading-strings, invented one of those stratagems which women advised by a priest are so clever in planning. To consult Monsieur Néraud, the Liberal physician, Monsieur Martener's rival, would be a blunder. Céleste Habert proposed to Sylvie to hide her in a dressing-closet while she, Mademoiselle Habert, consulted Monsieur Martener, who attended the school, on her own account. Whether he were Céleste's accomplice or no, Martener told his client that there was some, though very little, danger for a woman of thirty. "But with your constitution," he added, "you have nothing to fear."

"And if a woman is past forty?" asked Mademoiselle Céleste Habert.

"A woman of forty who has been married and had children need fear nothing."

"But an unmarried woman, perfectly well conducted—for example, Mademoiselle Rogron?"

"Well conducted! There can be no doubt," said Monsieur Martener. "In such a case the safe birth of a child is a miracle which God certainly works sometimes, but rarely."

"And why?" asked Céleste Habert.

Whereupon the doctor replied in a terrific pathological description, explaining that the elasticity bestowed by Nature on the muscles and joints in youth ceased to exist at a certain age, particularly in women whose occupations had made them sedentary for some years, like Mademoiselle Rogron.

"And so, after forty no respectable woman ought to marry?"

"Or she should wait," replied the doctor. "But then it is hardly a marriage; it is a partnership. What else could it be?"

In short, it was proved by this consultation, clearly, scientifically, seriously, and rationally, that after the age of forty a virtuous maiden should not rush into matrimony.

When Monsieur Martener had left, Mademoiselle Céleste

Habert found Mademoiselle Rogron green and yellow, her eyes dilated—in fact, in a frightful state.

"Then you truly love the Colonel?" said she.

"I still hoped," said the old maid.

"Well, then, wait," said Mademoiselle Habert, who knew that time would be avenged on the Colonel.

The morality of this marriage was also doubtful. Sylvie went to sound her conscience in the confessional. The stern director expounded the views of the Church, which regards marriage only as a means of propagating the race, reprobates second marriages, and scorns passions that have no social aim. Sylvie Rogron's perplexity was great. These mental struggles gave strange force to her passion, and lent it the unaccountable charm which forbidden joys have always had for women since the time of Eve.

Mademoiselle Rogron's disturbed state could not escape the lawyer's keen eye. One evening, after cards, Vinet went up to his dear friend Sylvie, took her hand, and led her to sit down with him on one of the sofas.

"Something ails you," he said in her ear.

She gloomily bent her head. The pleader let Rogron leave the room, sat alone with the old maid, and got her to make a clean breast of it.

"Well played, Abbé! But you have played my game for me," he said to himself after hearing of all the private consultations Sylvie had held, of which the last was the most alarming.

This sly legal fox was even more terrible in his explanations than the doctor had been; he advised the marriage, but only ten years hence for greater safety. The lawyer vowed that all the Rogron fortune should be Bathilde's. He rubbed his hands, and his very face grew sharper as he ran after Madame and Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf, whom he had left to start homeward with their servant armed with a lantern.

The influence exerted by Monsieur Habert, the physician of the soul, was entirely counteracted by Vinet, the physi-

cian of the purse. Rogron was by no means devout, so the man of the Church and the man of the Law, the two black gowns, pulled him opposite ways. When he heard of the victory carried off by Mademoiselle Habert, who hoped to marry Rogron, over Sylvie, hanging between the fear of death and the joy of becoming a baroness, Vinet perceived the possibility of removing the Colonel from the scene of battle. He knew Rogron well enough to find some means of making him marry the fair Bathilde. Rogron had not been able to resist the blandishments of Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf; Vinet knew that the first time Rogron should be alone with Bathilde and himself their engagement would be settled. Rogron had come to the point of staring at Mademoiselle Habert, so shy was he of looking at Bathilde.

Vinet had just seen how much Sylvie was in love with the Colonel. He understood the depth of such a passion in an old maid, no less eaten up by bigotry, and he soon hit on a plan for ruining at one blow both Pierrette and the Colonel, getting rid of one by means of the other.

Next morning, on coming out of Court, he met the Colonel and Rogron walking together, their daily habit.

When these three men were seen together, their conjunction always made the town talk. This triumvirate, held in horror by the Sous-prefét, the Bench, and the Tiphaine partisans, made a triad of which the Liberals of Provins were proud. Vinet edited the "Courrier" single-handed; he was the head of the party; the Colonel, the responsible manager of the paper, was its arm; Rogron, with his money, formed the sinews; he was considered as the link between the managing committee at Provins and the managing committee in Paris. To hear the Tiphaines, these three men were always plotting something against the Government, while the Liberals admired them as defenders of the people. When the lawyer saw Rogron returning to the Square, brought homeward by the dinner-hour, he took the Colonel's arm and hindered him from accompanying the ex-haberdasher.

"Look here, Colonel," said he, "I am going to take a

great weight off your shoulders. You can do better than marry Sylvie; if you go to work the right way, in two years' time you may marry little Pierrette Lorrain."

And he told him the results of the Jesuit's manœuvring.

"What a clever stroke—and reaching so far!" said the Colonel.

"Colonel," said Vinet gravely, "Pierrette is a charming creature; you may be happy for the rest of your days. You have such splendid health, that such a match would not, for you, have the usual drawbacks of an ill-assorted marriage; still, do not imagine that this exchange of a terrible life for a pleasant one will be easy to effect. To convert your lady-love into your confidante is a manœuvre as dangerous as, in your profession, it is to cross a river under the enemy's fire. Keen as you are as a cavalry officer, you must study the position, and carry out your tactics with the superior skill which has won us our present position. If I should one day be public prosecutor, you may command the department. Ah! if only you had a vote, we should be further on our way. I might have bought the votes of those two officials by indemnifying them for the loss of their places, and we should have had a majority. I should be sitting by Dupin, Casimir Périer, and—"

The Colonel had for some time past been thinking of Pierrette, but he hid the thought with deep dissimulation; his roughness to Pierrette was only on the surface. The child could not imagine why the man who called himself her father's old comrade treated her so ill, when, if he met her alone, he put his hand under her chin and gave her a fatherly caress. Ever since Vinet had confided to him Mademoiselle Sylvie's terror of marriage, Gouraud had sought opportunities of seeing Pierrette alone, and then the rough officer was as mild as a cat; he would tell her how brave her father was, and say what a misfortune for her his death had been.

A few days before Brigaut's arrival, Sylvie had found Gouraud and Pierrette together. Jealousy had then entered

into her soul with monastic vehemence. Jealousy, which is above all passions credulous and suspicious, is also that in which fancy has most power; but it does not lend wit, it takes it away; and in Sylvie jealousy gave birth to very strange ideas. She conceived that the man who had sung the words "Mistress Bride" to Pierrette must be the Colonel; and Sylvie thought she had reason to ascribe this serenade to the Colonel, because during the last week Gouraud's manner seemed to have undergone a change. This soldier was the only man who, in the solitude in which she had lived, had ever troubled himself about her; hence she watched him with all her eyes, all her understanding; and by dint of indulging in hopes alternately flourishing and blighted, she had given them so much scope that they produced the effect on her of a moral mirage. To use a fine but vulgar expression, by dint of looking she often saw nothing. By turns she rejected and struggled victoriously against the notion of this chimerical rivalry. She instituted comparisons between herself and Pierrette; she was forty, and her hair was gray; Pierrette was a deliciously white little girl, with eyes tender enough to bring warmth to a dead heart. She had heard it said that men of fifty were fond of little girls like Pierrette.

Before the Colonel had sown his wild oats and frequented the Rogrons' drawing-room, Sylvie had heard at the Tiphaines' parties strange reports of Gouraud and his doings. Old maids in love have the exaggerated Platonic notions which girls of twenty are apt to profess; they have never lost the hard-and-fast ideas which cling to all who have no experience of life, nor learned how social forces modify, erode, and coerce such fine and lofty notions. To Sylvie the idea of being deceived by her Colonel was a thought that hammered at her brain.

So from the hour, that morning, which every celibate spends in bed between waking and rising, the old maid had thought of nothing but herself and Pierrette, and the song which had aroused her by the words, "Mistress Bride." Like a simpleton, instead of peeping at the lover through the Vene-

tian shutters, she had opened her window, without reflecting that Pierrette would hear her. If she had but had the common wit of a spy, she would have seen Brigaut, and the fateful drama then begun would not have taken place.

Pierrette, weak as she was, removed the wooden bars which fastened the kitchen shutters, opened the shutters, and hooked them back, then she opened the passage door leading into the garden. She took the various brooms needed for sweeping the carpet, the dining-room floor, the passage, the stairs, in short, for cleaning everything with such care and exactitude as no servant, not even a Dutch one, would give to her work; she hated the least reproof. To her, happiness consisted in seeing Sylvie's little blue eyes, colorless and cold, with a look—not indeed of satisfaction, that they never wore—only calm when she had examined everything with the owner's eye, the inscrutable glance which sees what escapes the keenest observer.

By the time Pierrette returned to the kitchen her skin was moist; then she put everything in order, lighted the stove so as to have live charcoal, made the fire in her cousins' rooms, and put hot water for their toilet, though she had none for hers. She laid the table for breakfast and lighted the dining-room stove. For all these various tasks she had to go to the cellar to fetch brushwood, leaving a cool place to go to a hot one, or a hot place to go into the cold and damp. These sudden changes, made with the reckless haste of youth, merely to avoid a hard word, or to obey some order, aggravated the state of her health beyond remedy. Pierrette did not know that she was ill. Still she felt the beginnings of sufferings; she had strange longings, and hid them; a passion for raw salad, which she devoured in secret. The innocent child had no idea that this state meant serious disease, and needed the greatest care. Before Brigaut's arrival, if Néraud, who might accuse himself of her grandmother's death, had revealed this mortal peril to the little girl, she would have smiled; she found life too bitter not to smile at death. But within these last few minutes, she, who

added to her physical ailments the Breton homesickness—a moral sickness so well known that colonels of regiments reckon on it in the Bretons who serve in their regiments—she loved Provins. The sight of that gold-colored flower, that song, the presence of the friend of her childhood, had revived her as a plant long deprived of water recovers after hours of rain. She wanted to live; she did not believe that she had suffered!

She timidly stole into Sylvie's room, lighted the fire, left the hot-water pot, spoke a few words, went to awake her guardian, and then ran downstairs to take in the milk, the bread, and the other provisions supplied by the tradesmen. She stood for some time on the doorstep, hoping that Brigaut would have the wit to return; but Brigaut was already on the road to Paris. She had dusted the drawing-room and was busy in the kitchen, when she heard her cousin Sylvie coming downstairs. Mademoiselle Rogron made her appearance in a Carmelite gray silk dressing-gown, on her head a tulle cap decorated with bows, her false curls put on askew, her night-dress showing above the wrapper, her feet slipshod in her slippers. She inspected everything, and came to her little cousin, who was waiting to know what they would have for breakfast.

"So there you are, Miss Ladylove!" said Sylvie to Pierrette, in a half-merry, half-mocking tone.

"I beg your pardon, cousin?"

"You crept into my room like a sneak and out again in the same way; but you must have known that I should have something to say to you."

"To me?"

"You have had a serenade this morning like a princess, neither more nor less."

"A serenade?" exclaimed Pierrette.

"A serenade?" echoed Sylvie, mimicking her. "And you have a lover."

"Cousin, what do you mean by a lover?"

Sylvie evaded the question, and said:

"Do you dare to say, Mademoiselle, that a man did not come under our windows and talk to you of marriage!"

Persecution had taught Pierrette the cunning indispensable to slaves; she boldly replied, "I do not know what you mean—"

"Dog—" added the old maid in vinegar tones.

"Cousin," said Pierrette humbly.

"And you did not get up, I suppose, and did not go barefoot to your window? Enough to give you some bad illness. Well, catch it, and serve you right!—And I suppose you did not talk to your lover?"

"No, cousin."

"I knew you had a great many faults, but I did not know you told lies. Think of what you are about, Mademoiselle. You will have to tell your cousin Denis and me all about the scene of this morning, and explain it too; otherwise your guardian will have to take strong measures."

The old maid, devoured by jealousy and curiosity, was trying intimidation. Pierrette did as all people must who are enduring beyond their strength—she kept silence. Silence is to all creatures thus attacked the only means of salvation; it fatigues the Cossack charges of the envious, the enemy's savage rushes; it results in a crushing and complete victory. What is more complete than silence? It is final. Is it not one of the modes of the Infinite?

Sylvie looked stealthily at Pierrette. The child colored; but instead of flushing all over, the red lay in patches on her cheeks, in burning spots of symptomatic hue. On seeing these signals of ill-health, a mother would at once have changed her note; she would have taken the child on her knee, have questioned her, have acquired long since a thousand proofs of Pierrette's perfect and beautiful innocence, have suspected her weakness, and understood that the blood and humors diverted from their course were thrown back on the lungs after disturbing the digestive functions. Those eloquent scarlet patches would have warned her of imminent and mortal danger. But an old maid to whom the feelings

that guard the family, the needs of childhood, the care required in early womanhood were all unknown, could have none of the indulgence and the pity that are inspired by the thousand incidents of married and maternal life. The sufferings of misery, instead of softening her heart, had made it callous.

"She blushes—she has done wrong!" thought Sylvie. So Pierrette's silence received the worst construction.

"Pierrette," said she, "before your cousin Denis comes down we will have a little talk.—Come," she went on in a milder tone. "Shut the door to the street. If any one comes, they will ring; we shall hear."

In spite of the damp fog rising from the river, Sylvie led Pierrette, along the gravelled path that zigzagged between the grass-plots, to the edge of the terrace built in a so-called picturesque style of broken rockwork planted with flags and other water-plants. The old cousin now changed her tactics; she would try to catch Pierrette by gentleness. The hyena would play the cat.

"Pierrette," said she, "you are no longer a child; you will soon set foot in your fifteenth year, and it would not be at all astonishing if you had a lover."

"But, cousin," said Pierrette, raising her eyes of angelic sweetness to her cousin's cold, sour face, for Sylvie had put on her saleswoman expression, "what is a lover?"

It was impossible to Sylvie to define to her brother's ward with accuracy and decency what she meant by a lover; instead of regarding the question as the result of adorable innocence, she treated it as mendacious.

"A lover, Pierrette, is a man who loves you and wishes to marry you."

"Ah!" said Pierrette. "In Brittany when two persons are agreed we call the young man a suitor!"

"Well, understand that there is not the smallest harm in confessing your feeling for a man, my child. The harm is in secrecy. Have you, do you think, taken the fancy of any man who comes here?"

"I do not think so."

"You do not love one of them?"

"No one."

"Quite sure?"

"Quite sure."

"Look me in the face, Pierrette."

Pierrette looked at her cousin.

"And yet a man spoke to you from the Square this morning?"

Pierrette looked down.

"You went to your window, you opened it, and spoke to him."

"No, cousin; I wanted to see what the weather was like, and I saw a countryman on the Square."

"Pierrette, since your first Communion you have improved greatly, you are obedient and pious, you love your relations and God; I am pleased with you, but I never have told you so for fear of inflaming your pride."

The horrible woman mistook the dejection, the submission, the silence of wretchedness for virtues! One of the sweetest things that brings comfort to the sufferer, to martyrs, to artists, in the midst of the Divine wrath roused in them by envy and hatred, is to meet with praise from some quarter whence they have always had blame and bad faith. So Pierrette looked up at her cousin with attentive eyes, and felt ready to forgive her all the pain she had caused her.

"But if it is all mere hypocrisy, if I am to find in you a serpent I have cherished in my bosom, you would be an infamous, a horrible creature!"

"I do not think I have anything to blame myself for," said Pierrette, feeling a dreadful pang at her heart on this sudden transition from unexpected praise to the terrible accent of the hyena.

"You know that lying is a mortal sin?"

"Yes, cousin."

"Well, then, you stand before God!" said the old maid,

pointing with a solemn gesture to the gardens and the sky. "Swear to me that you do not know that countryman."

"I will not swear," said Pierrette.

"Ah! he was not a countryman! Little viper!"

Pierrette fled across the garden like a startled fawn, appalled by this moral dilemma. Her cousin called to her in an awful voice.

"The bell," she replied.

"What a sly little wretch!" said Sylvie to herself. "She has a perverse nature, and I am sure now that the little serpent has twisted herself round the Colonel. She has heard us say that he is a Baron. A Baroness, indeed! Little fool! Oh! I will be rid of her by placing her as an apprentice, and pretty soon too!"

Sylvie was so lost in thought that she did not see her brother coming down the walk and contemplating the mischief done by the frost to his dahlias.

"Well, Sylvie, what are you thinking about there? I thought you were looking at the fishes; sometimes they jump out of the water."

"No," said she.

"Well, how did you sleep?" and he proceeded to tell her his dreams of the past night. "Do not you think that my face looks patchy?" a favorite word with the Rogrons. Since Rogron had loved—nay, we will not profane the word—had desired Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf, he had been very anxious about his appearance and himself.

At this moment Pierrette came down the steps and called to them that breakfast was ready. On seeing her little cousin, Sylvie's complexion turned green and yellow; all her bile rose. She examined the passage, and said that Pierrette ought to have polished it with foot-brushes.

"I will polish it if you wish," replied the angel, not knowing how injurious this form of labor is to a young girl.

The dining-room was above blame. Sylvie sat down, and all through breakfast affected to want things that she never would have thought of in a calmer frame of mind, seeking

for them simply to make Pierrette rise to fetch them, and always just as the poor child was beginning to eat. But mere nagging was not enough; she sought some subject for fault-finding, and fumed with internal rage at finding none. If they had been eating eggs, she would certainly have complained of the boiling of hers. She hardly replied to her brother's silly talk, and yet she looked only at him; her eyes avoided Pierrette, who was keenly aware of this behavior.

Pierrette brought in the coffee for her cousins in a large silver cup, which served to heat the milk in, mixed with cream, in a saucepan of hot water. The brother and sister then added, to their taste, the black coffee which was made by Sylvie. When she had carefully prepared this dainty, Sylvie detected in it a faint cloud of coffee dust; she carefully skimmed it off the tawny mixture and looked at it, leaning over it to examine it more minutely. Then the storm burst.

"What is the matter?" asked Rogron.

"The matter! Miss, here, has put ashes in my coffee. Ashes in coffee are so nice! . . . Well, well! It is not astonishing; no one can do two things at once. Much she was thinking of the coffee! A blackbird might have flown through the kitchen, and she would not have heeded it this morning! How should she see the ashes flying? And then—only her cousin's!—Much she cares about it!"

She went on in this way, while she elaborately laid on the edge of her plate some fine coffee that had passed through the filter, mixed with some grains of sugar that had not melted.

"But, cousin, that is coffee," said Pierrette.

"So I am a liar now?" exclaimed Sylvie, looking at Pierrette, and scorching her by a fearful flash that her eyes could dart when she was angry.

These temperaments, which passion has never exhausted, have at command a great supply of the vital fluid. This phenomenon of extreme brightness in her eye under the influence of rage was all the more confirmed in Mademoiselle

Rogron because formerly, in her shop, she had had occasion to try the power of her gaze by opening her eyes enormously wide, always to fill her dependants with salutary terror.

"I will teach you to give me the lie," she went on; "you who deserve to be sent away from table to feed by yourself in the kitchen."

"What is the matter with you both?" cried Rogron. "You are as cross as two sticks this morning."

"Oh, my lady knows what I mean! I am giving her time to make up her mind before speaking to you about it, for I am much kinder to her than she deserves."

Pierrette looked through the window out on to the Square, so as not to meet her cousin's eyes, which frightened her.

"She pays no more heed than if I were talking to this sugar-basin! And she has sharp ears too; she can speak from the top of the house to answer some one below. . . . She is that perverse! Your ward is aggravating beyond words, and you need look for nothing good from her; do you hear me, Rogron?"

"What has she done that is so wicked?" asked her brother.

"At her age too! It is beginning young!" cried the old maid in a fury.

Pierrette rose to clear away, just to keep herself in countenance; she did not know which way to look. Though such language was nothing new to her, she never could get used to it. Her cousin's rage made her feel as though she had committed some crime. She wondered what her rage would be if she knew of Brigaut's escapade. Perhaps they would keep Brigaut away. All the thousand ideas of a slave crowded on her at once, thoughts swift and deep, and she resolved to resist by absolute silence as to an incident in which her conscience could see no evil.

She had to endure words so cruel, so harsh, insinuations so insulting, that on her return to the kitchen she was seized with cramp in the stomach and a violent attack of sickness. She dared not complain; she was not sure of getting any

care. She turned pale and faint, said that she felt ill, and went up to bed, clinging to the banisters at every step, and believing that her last hour had come. "Poor Brigaut!" thought she.

"She is ill," said Rogron.

"She ill! It is all megrims," said Sylvie, loud enough to be overheard. "She was not ill this morning, I can tell you!"

This last shot was too much for Pierrette, who crept to bed in tears, praying to God to remove her from this world.

For a month past Rogron had no longer carried the "Constitutionnel" to Gouraud; the Colonel obsequiously came to fetch the newspaper, to make talk, and take Rogron out when the weather was fine. Sylvie, sure of seeing the Colonel, and being able to question him, dressed herself coquettishly. The old maid thought she achieved this by putting on a green gown, a little yellow cashmere shawl bordered with red, and a white bonnet with meagre gray feathers. At the hour when the Colonel was due, she settled herself in the drawing-room with her brother, making him keep on his dressing-gown and slippers.

"It is a fine morning, Colonel," said Rogron, hearing Gouraud's heavy step: "but I am not dressed, my sister perhaps wanted to go out, she left me to mind the house; wait for me."

Rogron went off, leaving Sylvie with the Colonel.

"Where are you going? you are dressed like a goddess," observed Gouraud, seeing a certain solemnity of expression on the old maid's battered face.

"Yes, I was going out; but as the child is not well, I must stay at home."

"What is the matter with her?"

"I do not know; she asked to go to bed."

Gouraud's cautiousness, not to say his distrust, was constantly on the alert as a result of his collusion with Vinet. The lawyer evidently had the best of it. He edited the

paper, he ruled it as a master, and applied the profits to the editing; whereas the Colonel, the responsible stalking-horse, got little enough. Who was to be the député? Vinet. Who the great electioneer? Vinet. Who was always consulted? Vinet.

Then he knew, at least as well as Vinet, the extent and depth of the passion consuming Rogron for the fair Bathilde de Chargebœuf. This passion was becoming a mania, as all the lowest passions of men do. Bathilde's voice made the old bachelor thrill. Rogron, thinking only of his desire, concealed it; he dared not hope for such a match. The Colonel, to sound him, had told Rogron that he was about to propose for Bathilde's hand; Rogron had turned pale at the mere thought of such a formidable rival; he had become cold to Gouraud, almost hostile. Thus Vinet in every way ruled the roast, while he, the Colonel, was tied to the house only by the doubtful bond of a love which, on his part, was but feigned, and on Sylvie's as yet unconfessed. When the lawyer had divulged the priest's manœuvre and advised him to throw over Sylvie and pay his addresses to Pierrette, Vinet had humored his inclinations; still, as the Colonel analyzed the true purport of this suggestion, and examined the ground on which he stood, he fancied he could discern in his ally some hope of making mischief between him and Sylvie, and taking advantage of the old maid's fears to make the whole of Rogron's fortune fall into Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf's hands.

Hence, when Rogron left him alone with Sylvie, the Colonel's acumen seized on the slight indications which betrayed some uneasiness in Sylvie. He saw that she had planned to be under arms and alone with him for a minute. Gouraud, who already vehemently suspected Vinet of playing him some malignant trick, ascribed this conference to a secret suggestion of this legal ape; he put himself on guard, as when he had been making a reconnoissance in the enemy's country, keeping an eye on the whole prospect, listening for the least sound, his mind alert, his hand on his weapon. It

was the Colonel's weakness never to believe a word said by a woman; and when the old maid spoke of Pierrette, and said she was in bed at midday, he concluded that Sylvie had simply put her in disgrace in her room out of jealousy.

"The child is growing very pretty," said he, in an indifferent tone.

"Yes, she will be pretty," replied Mademoiselle Rogron.

"You ought now to send her to a shop in Paris," added the Colonel. "She would make a fortune. They look out for very pretty girls now in the milliners' shops."

"Is that really your advice?" asked Sylvie, in an anxious voice.

"Good! I have hit it!" thought the Colonel. "Vinet's advice that Pierrette and I should marry by and by was only intended to place me in this old witch's black-books.—Why," he said aloud, "what do you expect to do with her? Do you not see a perfectly lovely girl, Bathilde de Chargebœuf, of noble birth, well connected, and left to become an old maid? No one will have anything to say to her. Pierrette has nothing; she will never marry. Do you suppose that youth and beauty have any attraction for me, for instance?—for me, who, as Captain of Artillery in the Imperial Guard from the first day when the Emperor had a guard, have had my feet in every capital in Europe, and known the prettiest women in them all?—Youth and beauty—they are deuced common and silly. Don't talk of them to me!

"At eight-and-forty," he went on, adding to his age, "when a man has gone through the retreat from Moscow and the dreadful campaign in France, his loins are a bit weary; I am an old fellow. Now, a wife like you would cosset me and take care of me; her fortune, added to my few thousand francs of pension, would secure me suitable comfort for my old age, and I should like her a thousand times better than a minx who would give me no end of trouble, who would be thirty and have her passions when I should be sixty and have the rheumatism. At my time of life we think of these

things. And, between you and me, I may add that if I marry, I should hope to have no children."

Sylvie's face was transparent to the Colonel all through this speech, and her reply was enough to assure him of Vinet's perfidy.

"So you are not in love with Pierrette?" she exclaimed.

"Bless me! Are you crazy, my dear Sylvie?" cried he. "When we have lost all our teeth, is it the time to crack nuts? Thank God, I still have my wits, and know myself."

Sylvie would not then say more about herself; she thought herself very wily in using her brother's name.

"My brother," said she, "had thought of your marrying her."

"Your brother can never have had such a preposterous notion. A few days ago, to find out his secret, I told him that I was in love with Bathilde; he turned as white as your collar."

"Is he in love with Bathilde?" said Sylvie.

"Madly! And Bathilde certainly loves only his money." —("One for you, Vinet," thought Gouraud.)—"What should have made him speak of Pierrette?—No, Sylvie," he went on, taking her hand and pressing it with meaning, "since you have led to the subject"—he went close to her—"well" —he kissed her hand; he was a cavalry colonel, and had given proofs of courage—"know this: I want no wife but you. Though the marriage will look like a marriage for money, I feel true affection for you."

"But it was I who wished that you should marry Pierrette; and if I were to give her my money—what then, Colonel?"

"But I do not want to have a wretched home, or to see, ten years hence, some young whippersnapper, such as Julliard, hovering round my wife, and writing verses to her in the newspaper. I am too much a man on that score; I will never marry a woman out of all proportion too young."

"Well, Colonel, we will talk that over seriously," said Sylvie, with a glance she thought amorous, and which was

very like that of an ogress. Her cold, raw purple lips parted over her yellow teeth, and she fancied she was smiling.

"Here I am," said Rogron, and he led away the Colonel, who bowed courteously to the old maid.

Gouraud was determined to hasten his marriage with Sylvie, and so become master of the house; promising himself that, through the influence he would acquire over Sylvie during the honeymoon, he would get rid both of Bathilde and of Céleste Habert. So, as they walked, he told Rogron that he had been making fun of him the other day; that he had no intentions of winning Bathilde's heart, not being rich enough to take a wife who had no money. Then he confided his projects; he had long since chosen Sylvie for her admirable qualities; in short, he aspired to the honor of becoming his brother-in-law.

"Oh, Colonel! Oh, Baron! If only my consent were needed, it would be done as soon as legal delays should allow!" cried Rogron, delighted to find himself relieved of this terrible rival.

Sylvie spent the whole morning examining her own rooms to see if there were accommodation for a couple. She determined on building a second story for her brother, and having the first floor for herself and her husband; but she also promised herself, in accordance with the notions of every old maid, to put the Colonel to some tests, so as to judge of his heart and habits before making up her mind. She still had doubts, and wanted to make sure that Pierrette had no intimacy with the Colonel.

At dinner-time the girl came down to lay the cloth. Sylvie had been obliged to do the cooking, and had spotted her gown, exclaiming, "Curse Pierrette!" For it was evident, indeed, that if Pierrette had cooked the dinner, Sylvie would not have had a grease-stain on her silk dress.

"So here you are, you little coddle. You are like the blacksmith's dog that sleeps under the forge and wakes at the sound of a saucepan. So you want me to believe that you are ill, you little story-teller!"

The one idea, "You did not confess the truth as to what took place this morning, therefore everything you say is a lie," was like a hammer with which Sylvie was prepared to hit incessantly on Pierrette's head and heart.

To Pierrette's great astonishment, Sylvie sent her, after dinner, to dress for the evening. The liveliest imagination is no match for the energy which suspicion gives to the mind of an old maid. In such a case, the old maid beats politicians, attorneys and notaries, bill-brokers and misers. Sylvie promised herself that she would consult Vinet after looking well about her. She meant to keep Pierrette in the room, so as to judge for herself by the child's face whether the Colonel had told the truth.

The first to come were Madame de Chargebœuf and her daughter. By her cousin Vinet's advice, Bathilde had dressed with twice her usual elegance. She wore a most becoming blue cotton-velvet gown, the clear kerchief as before, bunches of grapes in garnets and gold for earrings, her hair in ringlets, the artful necklet, little black satin shoes, gray silk stockings, and Suède gloves, and then queenly airs and girlish coquettishness enough to catch every Rogron in the river. Her mother, calm and dignified, had preserved, as had Bathilde, a certain aristocratic impertinence by which these two women redeemed everything, betraying the spirit of their caste. Bathilde was gifted with superior intelligence, though Vinet alone had been able to discern it after the two months that these ladies had spent in his house. When he had sounded the depths of this girl, depressed by the uselessness of her youth and beauty, but enlightened by the contempt she felt for the men of a period when money was their sole idol, Vinet exclaimed in surprise:

"If I had but married you, Bathilde, by this time I should have been Keeper of the Seals; I would have called myself Vinet de Chargebœuf, and have sat on the Right."

Bathilde had no vulgar aims in her wish to be married; she would not marry for motherhood, nor for the sake of having a husband; she would marry to be free, to have

a "responsible publisher," as it were—to be called Madame, and to act as men act. Rogron to her was a name; she thought she could make something of this imbecile creature —a député, who might vote while she pulled the wires; she wanted to be revenged on her family, who had paid little heed to a penniless girl. Vinet, admiring and encouraging her ideas, had greatly extended and strengthened them.

"My dear cousin," said he, explaining to her the influence exerted by women, and pointing out the sphere of action proper to them, "do you suppose that Tiphaine, a profoundly mediocre man, can by his own merits rise to sit on the lower bench in Paris? It is Madame Tiphaine who got him returned as deputy; it is she who will carry him to Paris. Her mother, Madame Roguin, is a cunning body, who does what she pleases with du Tillet the banker, one of Nucingen's chief allies, both of them close friends of Keller's; and these three houses do great services to the Government or its most devoted adherents; the offices are on the best possible terms with these lynxes of the financial world, and men like those know all Paris. There is nothing to hinder Tiphaine from rising to be the Presiding Judge of one of the higher Courts. —Marry Rogron; we will make him deputy for Provins as soon as I have secured for myself some other constituency in Seine-et-Marne. Then you will have a receivership—one of those places where Rogron will have nothing to do but to sign his name. We will stick to the Opposition if it triumphs; but if the Bourbons remain in power, O how gently we will incline toward the Centre! Besides, Rogron will not live forever, and you can marry a title by and by. And then, if you are in a good position, the Chargebœufs will help us. Your poverty—like mine—has, no doubt, enabled you to estimate what men are worth; they are to be made use of only as post-horses. A man or a woman can take us from one stage to the next!"

Vinet had made a little Catherine de Medici of Bathilde. He left his wife at home, happy with her two children, and

always attended Madame de Chargebœuf and Bathilde to the Rogrons'. He appeared in all his glory as the tribune of Champagne. He wore neat gold spectacles, a silk waistcoat, a white cravat, black trousers, thin boots, a black coat made in Paris, a gold watch and chain. Instead of the Vinet of old—pale, lean, haggard, and gloomy—he exhibited the Vinet of the day, in all the bravery of a political personage; sure of his luck, he trod with the decision peculiar to a busy advocate familiar with the caverns of justice. His small, cunning head was so smartly brushed, and his clean-shaven chin gave him such a finished though cold appearance, that he looked quite pleasing, in the style of Robespierre. He might certainly become a delightful public prosecutor, with an elastic, dangerous, and deadly flow of eloquence, or an orator, with all the subtlety of Benjamin Constant. The acrimony and hatred which had formerly animated him had turned to perfidious softness. The poison had become medicine.

"Good evening, my dear, how are you?" said Madame de Chargebœuf to Sylvie.

Bathilde went straight to the fireplace, took off her hat, looked at herself in the glass, and put her pretty foot on the bar of the fender to display it to Rogron.

"What ails you, Monsieur?" said she, looking at him. "You give me no greeting? Well, indeed! I may put on a velvet frock for your benefit . . ."

She stopped Pierrette, bidding her put her hat on a chair, and the girl took it from her, Bathilde resigning it to her as though Pierrette had been the housemaid.

Men are thought very fierce, and so are tigers; but neither tigers, nor vipers, nor diplomats, nor men of law, nor executioners, nor kings, can in their utmost atrocities come near the gentle cruelty, the poisoned sweetness, the savage scorn of young ladies to each other when certain of them think themselves superior to others in birth, fortune, or grace, and when marriage is in question, or precedence, or, in short, any feminine rivalry. The "Thank you, Mademoiselle,"

spoken by Bathilde to Pierrette, was a poem in twelve cantos.

Her name was Bathilde, the other's was Pierrette; she was a Chargebœuf, the other a Lorrain! Pierrette was undersized and fragile, Bathilde was tall and full of vitality! Pierrette was fed by charity, Bathilde and her mother lived on their own money! Pierrette wore a stuff frock with a deep tucker, Bathilde dragged the serpentine folds of her blue velvet; Bathilde had the finest shoulders in the department, and an arm like a queen's, Pierrette's shoulder-blades and arms were skinny; Pierrette was Cinderella, Bathilde the fairy; Bathilde would get married, Pierrette would die a maid! Bathilde was worshipped, Pierrette had no one to love her! Bathilde had her hair dressed—she had taste, Pierrette hid her hair under a little cap, and knew nothing of the fashions! *Epilogue*—Bathilde was everything, Pierrette was nothing. The proud little Bretonne perfectly understood this cruel poem.

"Good-evening, child," said Madame de Chargebœuf from the summit of her grandeur, and with an accent given by her narrow pinched nose.

Vinet put the crowning touch to these insulting civilities by looking at Pierrette and saying, on three notes, "Oh, oh, oh! How fine we are this evening, Pierrette!"

"I!" said the poor child. "You should say that to your cousin, not to me. She is beautiful!"

"Oh, my cousin is always beautiful," replied the lawyer. "Do not you say so, Père Rogron?" he added, turning to the master of the house, and shaking hands with him.

"Yes," said Rogron.

"Why force him to say what he does not think? I never was to his taste," replied Bathilde, placing herself in front of Rogron. "Is not that the truth?—Look at me."

Rogron looked at her from head to foot, and gently closed his eyes, like a cat when its poll is scratched.

"You are too beautiful," said he, "too dangerous to look at."

"Why?"

Rogron gazed at the fire-logs and said nothing.

At this moment Mademoiselle Habert came, followed by the Colonel. Cèleste Habert, everybody's enemy now, had none but Sylvie on her side; but each one showed her all the greater consideration, politeness, and amiable attention because all were undermining her, so that she doubted between this display of civil interest and the distrust which her brother had implanted in her. The priest, though standing apart from the theatre of war, guessed everything; and so, when he perceived that his sister's hopes were at an end, he became one of the Rogrons' most formidable antagonists.

The reader can at once imagine what Mademoiselle Habert was like on being told that even if she had not been mistress —arch-mistress—of a school, she would still always have looked like a governess. Governesses have a particular way of putting on their caps. Just as elderly Englishwomen have monopolized the fashion of turbans, so governesses have the monopoly of these caps; the crown of the cap towers above the flowers, the flowers are more than artificial; stored carefully in a wardrobe, this cap is always new and always old, even on the first day. These old maids make it a point of honor to be like a painter's lay figure; they sit on their haunches, not on their chairs. When they are spoken to they turn their whole body; and when their gowns creak, we are tempted to believe that the springs of the machinery are out of order. Mademoiselle Habert, a type of her kind, had a hard eye, a set mouth, and under her chin, furrowed with wrinkles, the limp and crumpled capstrings wagged and frisked as she moved. She had an added charm in two moles, rather large and rather brown, with hairs that she left to grow like untied clematis. Finally, she took snuff, and without grace.

They sat down to the toil of boston. Sylvie had opposite to her Mademoiselle Habert, and the Colonel sat on one side, opposite Madame de Chargebœuf. Bathilde placed herself near her mother and Rogron. Sylvie put Pierrette between

herself and the Colonel. Rogron opened another card-table in case Monsieur Néraud should come, and Monsieur Cournant and his wife. – Vinet and Bathilde could both play whist, which was Monsieur and Madame Cournant's game. Ever since the Chargebœuf ladies—as they say in Provins—had been in the habit of coming to the Rogrons, the two lamps blazed on the chimney-piece between the candelabra and the clock, and the tables were lighted by wax lights at two francs a pound, which, however, was paid by winnings at cards.

"Now, Pierrette, my child, take your sewing," said Sylvie with treacherous gentleness, seeing her watch the Colonel's play.

In public she always pretended to treat Pierrette very kindly. This mean deceit irritated the honest Bretonne, and made her despise her cousin. Pierrette fetched her embroidery; but as she set the stitches, she looked now and then at the Colonel's game. Gouraud seemed not to know that there was a little girl at his side. Sylvie began to think this indifference extremely suspicious. At a certain moment in the game the old maid declared *misère* in hearts; the pool was full of counters, and there were twenty-seven sous in it besides. The Cournants and Néraud had come. The old supernumerary judge, Desfondrilles—a man in whom the Minister of Justice had discerned the qualifications for a judge when appointing him examining magistrate, but who was never thought clever enough for a superior position—had for the last two months forsaken the Tiphaines, and shown a leaning toward Vinet's party. He was now standing in front of the fire, holding up his coat-tails, and gazing at the gorgeous drawing-room in which Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf shone; for the setting of crimson looked as if it had been contrived on purpose to show off the beauty of this magnificent young woman. Silence reigned; Pierrette watched the play, and Sylvie's attention was diverted by the excitement of the game.

"Play that," said Pierrette to the Colónel, pointing to a heart.

The Colonel led from a sequence in hearts; the hearts lay between him and Sylvie; the Colonel forced the ace, though it was guarded in Sylvie's hand by five small cards.

"It is not fair play! Pierrette saw my hand, and the Colonel allowed her to advise him!"

"But, Mademoiselle," said Céleste, "it was the Colonel's game to lead hearts since he found that you had one!"

The speech made Desfondrilles smile; he was a keen observer, who amused himself with watching all the interests at stake in Provins, where he played the part of Rigaudin in Picard's play of "la Maison en loterie."

"It was the Colonel's game," Cournant put in, without knowing anything about it.

Sylvie shot at Mademoiselle Habert a look of old maid against old maid, villanous but honeyed.

"Pierrette, you saw my hand," said Sylvie, fixing her eyes on the girl.

"No, cousin."

"I was watching you all," said the archæological judge; "I can bear witness that the little girl saw no one's hand but the Colonel's."

"Pooh! these little girls know very well how to steal a glance with their sweet eyes," said Gouraud in alarm.

"Indeed!" said Sylvie.

"Yes," replied Gouraud; "she may have looked over your hand to play you a trick. Was it not so, my beauty?"

"No," said the honest Bretonne. "I am incapable of such a thing! In that case I should have followed my cousin's game."

"You know very well that you are a story-teller and a little fool into the bargain," said Sylvie. "Since what took place this morning, who can believe a word you say? You are a . . ."

Pierrette did not wait to hear her cousin end the sentence in her presence. Anticipating a torrent of abuse, she rose, went out of the room without a light, and up to her room.

Sylvie turned pale with rage, and muttered between her teeth, "I will pay her out!"

"Will you pay your losses?" said Madame de Chargebœuf.

At this moment poor Pierrette hit her head against the passage door which the judge had left open.

"Good! That serves her right!" cried Sylvie.

"What has happened?" asked Desfondrilles.

"Nothing that she does not deserve," replied Sylvie.

"She has given herself some severe blow," said Mademoiselle Habert.

Sylvie tried to evade paying her stakes by rising to see what Pierrette had done; but Madame de Chargebœuf stopped her.

"Pay us first," said she, laughing; "by the time you return you will have forgotten all about it."

This suggestion, based on the bad faith the ex-haberdasher showed in the matter of her gambling debts, met with general approval. Sylvie sat down and thought no more of Pierrette; and no one was surprised at her indifference. All the evening Sylvie was absent-minded. When cards were over, at about half-past nine, she sank into an easy-chair by the fire, and only rose to take leave of her guests. The Colonel tortured her; she did not know what to think about him.

"Men are so false!" said she to herself as she fell asleep.

Pierrette had given herself a frightful blow against the edge of the door, just over her ear, where girls part their hair to put the forepart into curl-papers. Next morning there was a bad purple-veined bruise.

"God has punished you," said Sylvie at breakfast; "you disobeyed me, you showed a great want of respect in not listening to me, and in going away in the middle of my sentence. You have no more than you deserve."

"Still," said Rogron, "you should put on a rag dipped in salt and water."

"Pooh! It is nothing!" said Sylvie.

The poor child had come to the point when she thought her guardian's remark a proof of interest.

The week ended as it had begun, in constant torment. Sylvie became ingenious, and carried her refinement of tyranny to an extreme pitch. The Illinois, Cherokees, and Mohicans might have learned of her. Pierrette dared not complain of her indefinite misery and the pain she suffered in her head. At the bottom of Sylvie's displeasure lay the girl's refusal to tell anything about Brigaut; and Pierrette, with Breton obstinacy, was determined to keep a very natural silence. Every one can imagine what a glance she gave Brigaut, who, as she believed, would be lost to her if he were discovered, and whom she instinctively longed to keep near her, happy in knowing that he was at Provins. What a delight to her to see Brigaut again! The sight of the companion of her childhood was to her like the view an exile gets from afar of his native land; she looked on him as a martyr gazes at the sky when, during his torments, his eyes, blessed with double sight, see through to heaven.

Pierrette's parting glance had been so perfectly intelligible to the Major's son, that while he planed his boards, opened his compasses, took his measurements, and fitted his pieces, he racked his brains for some means of corresponding with Pierrette. Brigaut at last hit on this extremely simple plan. At a certain hour at night Pierrette must let down a string, and he would tie a letter to the end of it. In the midst of her terrible sufferings from two maladies, an abscess which was forming in her head, and her general disorderment, Pierrette was sustained by the idea of corresponding with Brigaut. The same desire agitated both hearts; though apart, they understood each other! At every pang that made her heart flutter, at every pain that shot through her brain, Pierrette said to herself, "Brigaut is at hand!" and then she could suffer without complaining.

On the next market-day after their first meeting in the church, Brigaut looked out for his little friend. Though he

saw that she was pale, and trembling like a November leaf about to drop from the bough, without losing his head he went to bargain for some fruit at the stall where the terrible Sylvie was beating down the price of her purchases. Brigaut contrived to slip a note into Pierrette's hand, and he did it naturally, while jesting with the market woman, and with all the dexterity of a rake, as if he had never done anything else, so coolly did he manage it, in spite of the hot blood that sang in his ears and surged boiling from his heart, almost bursting the veins and arteries. On the surface he had the determination of an old housebreaker, and within the quaking heart of innocence, like mothers sometimes in their mortal anguish, when they are gripped between two dangers, between two precipices. Pierrette felt Brigaut's dizziness; she crushed the paper into her apron pocket; the pallor of her cheeks changed to the cherry redness of a fierce fire. These two children each unconsciously went through sensations enough for ten commonplace love-affairs. That instant left in their souls a well-spring of emotions. Sylvie, who did not recognize the Breton accent, could not suspect a lover in Brigaut, and Pierrette came home with her treasure.

The letters of these two poor children were destined to serve as documents in a horrible legal squabble; for, but for that fatal circumstance, they never would have been seen. This is what Pierrette read that evening in her room:

"My dear Pierrette—At midnight, when everybody is asleep, but when I shall be awake for your sake, I will come every night under the kitchen window. You can let down out of your window a string long enough to reach me, which will make no noise, and tie to the end of it whatever you want to write to me. I will answer you in the same way. I knew that you had been taught to read and write by those wretched relations who were to do you so much good, and who are doing you so much harm! You, Pierrette, the daughter of a Colonel who died for France, are compelled by these monsters to cook for them! That is

how your pretty color and your fine health have vanished. What has become of my Pierrette? What have they done to her? I can see plainly that you are not happy.

"Oh! Pierrette, let us go back to Brittany. I can earn enough to give you everything you need; you may have three francs a day, for I earn from four to five, and thirty sous are plenty for me. Oh! Pierrette, how I have prayed to God for you since seeing you again. I have asked Him to give me all your pain, and to grant you all the pleasures.

"What have you to do with them that they keep you? Your grandmother is more to you than they are. These Rogrons are venomous; they have spoiled all your gayety. You do not even walk at Provins as you used to move in Brittany. Let us go home to Brittany. In short, here I am to serve you, to do your bidding; and you must tell me what you wish. If you want money, I have sixty crowns of ours, and I shall have the grief of sending them to you by the string instead of kissing your dear hands respectfully when I give you the money. Ah! my dear Pierrette, the blue sky has now for a long time been dark to me. I have not had two hours of joy since I put you into that ill-starred diligence; and when I saw you again, like a shade, that witch of a cousin disturbed our happiness. However, we shall have the comfort of praying to God together every Sunday; He will perhaps hear us the better. Not good-by, dear Pierrette, only till to-night."

This letter agitated her so greatly that she sat for above an hour reading and re-reading it; but she reflected, not without pain, that she had nothing to write with. So she made up her mind to the difficult expedition from her attic to the dining-room, where she could find ink, pen, and paper; and she accomplished it without waking Sylvie. A few minutes before midnight she had finished this letter, which was also produced in Court:

"My Friend—Oh, yes, my friend! For there is no one but you, Jacques, and my grandmother, who loves me. God

forgive me, but you are the only two persons I love, one as much as the other, neither more nor less. I was too little to remember my mother; but you, Jacques, and my grandmother, and my grandfather, too, God rest his soul, for he suffered much from his ruin, which was mine too—in short, you are the only two remaining, and I love you as much as I am wretched! So to know how much I love you, you would have to know how much I suffer; but I do not wish that—it would make you too unhappy. I am spoken to as you would not speak to a dog; I am treated as if I were dirt; and in vain I examine myself as if I were before God, I cannot see that I am in fault toward them. Before you sang the bride's song to me I saw that God was good in my misery; for I prayed to Him to take me out of this world, and as I felt very ill, I said to myself, 'God has heard me!'

"But since you have come, Brigaut, I want to go away with you to Brittany to see my grandmamma, who loves me, though they tell me she has robbed me of eight thousand francs. Brigaut, if they are really mine, can you get them? But it is all a lie; if we had eight thousand francs, grandmamma would not be at Saint-Jacques. I would not trouble that good saintly woman's last days by telling her of my miseries; it would be enough to kill her. Ah! if she could know that they make her grandchild wash the pots and pans—she who would say to me, 'Leave that alone, my darling,' when I tried to help her in her troubles; 'leave it, leave it, my pet; you will spoil your pretty little hands.' Well, my nails are clean at any rate! Many times I cannot carry the market basket, and the handle saws my arm as I come home from market.

"At the same time, I do not think that my cousins are cruel; but it is their way always to be scolding, and it would seem that I can never get away from them. My cousin Rogron is my guardian. One day when I meant to run away, as I was too miserable, and I told them so, my cousin Sylvie answered that the police would go after me, that the law was on my guardian's side; and I saw very clearly that cousins

can no more take the place of our father and mother than the Saints can take the place of God.—My poor Jacques, what use could I make of your money? Keep it for our journey. Oh! how I have thought of you and Pen-Hoël and the large pool. It was there we knew our first, our real enjoyment, for it seems to me that all the joy of this life has departed. I am very ill, Jacques. I have such pains in my head that I could scream, and in my back and my bones; something round my loins that half kills me; and I have no appetite but for nasty things, leaves and roots, and I like the smell of printed paper. There are times when I should cry if I were alone, for I may not do anything as I wish; I am not even allowed to cry. I have to hide myself to offer up my tears to Him from whom we receive those mercies which we call our afflictions. Was it not He who inspired you with the good idea of coming to sing the bride's song under my window?—Oh! Jacques, cousin Sylvie, who heard you, told me I had a lover. If you will be my lover, love me very much; I promise always to love you, as in the past, and to be your faithful servant,

"PIERRETTE LORRAIN.

"You will always love me, won't you?"

The girl had taken a crust of bread from the kitchen, in which she made a hole to stick her letter in, so as to weight the thread. At midnight, after opening her window with excessive caution, she let down her note with the bread, which could make no noise by tapping against the wall or the shutters. She felt the thread pulled by Brigaut, who broke it, and then went stealthily away. When he was in the middle of the Square she could see him, though indistinctly, in the starlight; but he could gaze at her in the luminous band projected by the candle. The two young things remained there for an hour, Pierrette signalling to him to go away, he going and she remaining, and he returning to his post, while Pierrette again waved to him to be

gone. This was several times repeated, till the girl shut her window, got into bed, and blew out her light.

Once in bed, she went to sleep, happy though suffering; she had Brigaut's letter under her pillow. She slept the sleep of the persecuted, a sleep blessed by the angels, the sleep of golden and far-away glories full of the arabesques of heaven, which Raphael dreamed of and drew.

Her delicate physical nature was so responsive to her moral nature that Pierrette rose next morning as glad and light as a lark, beaming and gay. Such a change could not escape Sylvie's eye; this time, instead of scolding her, she proceeded to watch her with the cunning of a raven.

"What makes her so happy?" was suggested by jealousy, and not by tyranny. If Sylvie had not been possessed by the idea of the Colonel, she would certainly have said as usual, "Pierrette, you are very turbulent, or very heedless of what is said to you." The old maid determined to spy on Pierrette, as only old maids can spy. The day passed in gloom and silence, like the hour before a storm.

"So you are no longer so ailing, Miss?" said Sylvie at dinner. "Did not I tell you that she shams it all to worry us?" she exclaimed, turning to her brother, without waiting for Pierrette's reply.

"On the contrary, cousin, I have a sort of fever—"

"What sort of fever? You are as gay as a linnet. You have seen some one again perhaps?"

Pierrette shuddered and kept her eyes on her plate.

"*Tartufe!*" cried Sylvie. "At fourteen! Already! What a nature! Why, you will be a wretch indeed!"

"I do not know what you mean," replied Pierrette, raising her fine luminous hazel eyes to her cousin's face.

"This evening," said Sylvie, "you will remain in the dining-room to sew by a candle. You are in the way in the drawing-room, and I will not have you looking over my hand to advise your favorites."

Pierrette did not flinch.

"Hypocrite!" exclaimed Sylvie as she left the room.

Rogron, who could not understand what his sister was talking about, said to Peirrette, "What is the matter between you two? Try, Pierrette, to please your cousin; she is most indulgent, most kind; and if she is put out with you, certainly you must be wrong. Why do you squabble? For my part, I like a quiet life. Look at Mademoiselle Bathilde; you should try to copy her."

Pierrette could bear it all; Brigaut would come, beyond doubt, at midnight to bring his answer, and this hope was her viaticum for the day. But she was exhausting her last strength. She did not go to sleep; she sat up listening to the clocks strike the hours, and fearing to make a sound. At last twelve struck; she softly opened her window, and this time she used a string she had made long enough by tying several bits together. She heard Brigaut's step, and when she drew up the string she read the following letter, which filled her with joy:

"My dear Pierrette—If you are in such pain, you must not tire yourself by sitting up for me. You will be sure to hear me call like a *Chouan*. My father luckily taught me to imitate their cry. So I shall repeat it three times, and you will know that I have come, and that you must let down the string, but I shall not come again for some few days. I hope then to have good news for you. Oh! Pierrette, not death! What are you thinking of? All my heart quaked, I thought I was dead myself at the mere idea. No, my Pierrette, you shall not die; you shall live happy, and soon be rescued from your persecutors. If I should not succeed in what I am attempting, to save you, I would go to the lawyers and declare in the face of heaven and earth how you are treated by your cruel relations.

"I am certain that you have only to endure a few days more: take patience. Pierrette, Brigaut is watching over you, as he did in the days when we went to slide on the pond, and I pulled you out of the deep hole where we were so nearly lost together. Good-by, my dear Pierrette; in

a few days we shall be happy, please God. Alas! I dare not tell you of the only thing that may hinder our meeting. But God loves us! So in a few days I shall be able to see my dear Pierrette in liberty, without a care, without any one hindering my looking at you, for I am very hungry to see you, O Pierrette! Pierrette, who condescends to love me and to tell me so. Yes, Pierrette, I will be your lover, but only when I have earned the grand fortune you deserve, and till then I will be no more to you than a devoted servant whom you may command. Adieu.

"JACQUES BRIGAUT."

This was what the young fellow did not tell Pierrette. He had written the following letter to Madame Lorrain at Nantes:

"MADAME LORRAIN — Your granddaughter will die, killed by ill-usage, if you do not come to claim her back. I hardly knew her again; and to enable you to judge for yourself of the state of things, I inclose in this letter one from Pierrette to me. You are reported here to have your grandchild's fortune, and you ought to justify yourself on this point. In short, if you can, come quickly; we may yet be happy, and later you will find Pierrette dead.

"I remain, with respect, your humble servant,

"JACQUES BRIGAUT.

"At Monsieur Frappier's, Master joiner, Grand' Rue, Provins."

Brigaut only feared lest Pierrette's grandmother might be dead.

Though this letter from him, whom in her innocence she called her lover, was almost inexplicable to Pierrette, she accepted it with virgin faith. Her heart experienced the feeling which travellers in the desert know when they see from afar the palm grove round a well. In a few days her miseries would be ended, Brigaut said it; she slept on the promise of her childhood's friend; and yet, as she laid this

letter with the former one, a dreadful thought found dreadful expression: "Poor Brigaut," said she to herself, "he does not know the hole I have my feet in!"

Sylvie had heard Pierrette; she had also heard Brigaut below the window; she sprang up, rushed to look out on the Square through the shutter slats, and saw a man going away toward the house where the Colonel lived. In front of that Brigaut stopped. The old maid gently opened her door, went upstairs, was amazed at seeing a light in Pierrette's room, peeped through the keyhole, and could see nothing.

"Pierrette," said she, "are you ill?"

"No, cousin," said Pierrette, startled.

"Then why have you a light in your room at midnight? Open your door. I must know what you are about."

Pierrette, barefoot, opened the door, and Sylvie saw the skein of twine which Pierrette, never dreaming of being caught, had neglected to put away. Sylvie pounced upon it.

"What do you use that for?"

"Nothing, cousin."

"Nothing?" said she. "Very good. Lies again! You will not find that the way to heaven. Go to bed; you are cold."

She asked no more, but disappeared, leaving Pierrette terror-stricken by such leniency. Instead of an outbreak, Sylvie had suddenly made up her mind to steal a march on the Colonel and Pierrette, to possess herself of the letters, and confound the couple who were deceiving her. Pierrette, inspired by danger, put the two letters inside her stays and covered them with calico.

This was the end of the loves of Pierrette and Brigaut.

Pierrette was glad of her friend's decision, for Sylvie's suspicions would be disconcerted by having nothing to feed on. And, in fact, Sylvie spent three nights out of her bed and three evenings in watching the innocent Colonel, without discovering anything in Pierrette's room, or in the house or out of it, that hinted at their having any understanding. She sent Pierrette to confession, and took advantage of her

absence to hunt through everything in the child's room as dexterously and as keenly as the spies and searchers at the gates of Paris. She found nothing. Her rage rose to the climax of human passion. If Pierrette had been present, she would certainly have beaten her without ruth. To a woman of this temper, jealousy was not so much a feeling as a possession; she breathed, she felt her heart beat, she had emotions in a way hitherto completely unknown to her; at the least movement she was on the alert, she listened to the faintest sounds, she watched Pierrette with gloomy concentration.

"That little wretch will be the death of me!" she would say.

Sylvie's severity to the child became at last the most refined cruelty, and aggravated the miserable state in which Pierrette lived. The poor little thing was constantly in a fever, and the pain in her head became intolerable. By the end of a week she displayed to the frequenters of the Rogrons' house a face of suffering which must certainly have softened any less cruel egotism; but Doctor Néraud, advised perhaps by Vinet, did not call for more than a week. The Colonel, suspected by Sylvie, was afraid she might break off their marriage if he showed the smallest anxiety about Pierrette; Bathilde accounted for her indisposition by simple causes, in no way dangerous.

At last, one Sunday evening, when the drawing-room was full of company, Pierrette could not endure the pain; she fainted completely away; and the Colonel, who was the first to observe that she had lost consciousness, lifted her up and carried her on to a sofa.

"She did it on purpose," said Sylvie, looking at Mademoiselle Habert and the other players.

"Your cousin is very ill, I assure you," said the Colonel.

"She was very well in your arms," retorted Sylvie, with a hideous smile.

"The Colonel is right," said Madame de Chargebœuf; "you ought to send for a doctor. This morning in church

every one was talking of Mademoiselle Lorrain's state as they came out—it is obvious."

"I am dying," said Pierrette.

Desfondrilles called to Sylvie to unfasten the girl's frock. Sylvie complied, saying, "It is all a sham!"

She undid the dress, and was going to loosen the stays. Then Pierrette found superhuman strength; she sat up, and exclaimed, "No, no; I will go to bed."

Sylvie had touched her stays, and had felt the papers. She allowed Pierrette to escape, saying to everybody, "Well, do you think she is so very ill? It is all put on; you could never imagine the naughtiness of that child."

She detained Vinet at the end of the evening; she was furious, she was bent on revenge; she was rough with the Colonel as he bid her good-night. Gouraud shot a glance at Vinet that seemed to pierce him to the very bowels, and mark the spot for a bullet. Sylvie begged Vinet to remain. When they were alone, the old maid began: "Never in my life, nor in all my days, will I marry the Colonel!"

"Now that you have made up your mind, I may speak. The Colonel is my friend; still, I am yours rather than his. Rogron has done me services I can never forget. I am as firm a friend as I am an implacable enemy. Certainly, when once I am in the Chamber you will see how I shall rise, and I will make Rogron a Receiver-General.—Well, swear to me never to repeat a word of our conversation!" Sylvie nodded assent. "In the first place, our gallant Colonel is an inveterate gambler."

"Indeed!" said Sylvie.

"But for the difficulties this passion has got him into, he might perhaps have been a Marshal of France," the lawyer went on. "So he might squander all your fortune. But he is a deep customer. Do not believe that married people have or have not children; and you know what will happen to you. No. If you wish to marry, wait till I am in the Chamber, and then you can marry old Desfondrilles, who will be President of the Court here. To revenge yourself, make your

brother marry Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf; I will undertake to get her consent; she will have two thousand francs a year, and you will be as nearly connected with the Chargebœufs as I am. Take my word for it, the Chargebœufs will call us cousins some day."

"Gouraud is in love with Pierrette," replied Sylvie.

"He is quite capable of it," said Vinet; "and quite capable of marrying her after your death."

"A pretty little scheme!" said she.

"I tell you, he is as cunning as the devil. Make your brother marry, and announce that you intend to remain unmarried and leave your money to your nephews or nieces; you will thus hit Pierrette and Gouraud by the same blow, and you will see how foolish he will look."

"To be sure," cried the old maid; "I can catch them. She shall go into a shop, and will have nothing. She has not a penny. Let her do as we did, and work."

Vinet having got his idea into Sylvie's head, and knowing her obstinacy, left the house. The old maid ended by thinking that the plan was her own.

Vinet found the Colonel outside, smoking a cigar while he waited for him.

"Hold hard!" said the Colonel. "You have pulled me to pieces, but there are stones enough in the ruins to bury you."

"Colonel!"

"There is no 'Colonel' in the case. I am going to lead you a dance. In the first place, you will never be deputy—"

"Colonel!"

"I can command ten votes, and the election depends on—"

"Colonel, just listen to me. Is there no one in the world but old Sylvie? I have just been trying to clear you. You are accused and proved guilty of writing to Pierrette; she has seen you coming out of your house at midnight to stand below the girl's window—"

"Well imagined!"

"She means her brother to marry Bathilde, and will keep her fortune for their children."

"Will Rogron have any?"

"Yes," said Vinet. "But I promise to find you a young and agreeable woman with a hundred and fifty thousand francs.—Are you mad? Can you and I afford to quarrel? Things have turned against you in spite of me; but you do not know me."

"Well, we must learn to know each other," replied the Colonel. "Get me a wife with fifty thousand crowns before the elections—otherwise, your servant. I do not like awkward bedfellows, and you have pulled all the blankets to your side. Good-night."

"You will see," said Vinet, shaking hands affectionately with the Colonel.

At about one in the morning three clear, low hoots, like those of an owl, admirably mimicked, sounded in the Place; Pierrette heard them in her fevered sleep. She got up, quite damp, opened her window, saw Brigaut, and threw out a ball of silk, to which he tied a letter.

Sylvie, excited by the events of the evening and her own deliberations, was not asleep; she was taken in by the owl's cry. "Ah! what a bird of ill-omen!—But, hark! Pierrette is out of bed. What does she want?"

On hearing the attic window open, Sylvie rushed to her own window and heard Brigaut's paper rustle against the shutters. She tied her jacket strings, and nimbly mounted the stairs to Pierrette's room; she found her untying the silk from round the letter. "So I have caught you!" cried the old maid, going to the window, whence she saw Brigaut take to his heels. "Give me that letter."

"No, cousin," said the girl, who, by one of the stupendous inspirations of youth, and sustained by her spirit, rose to the dignity of resistance which we admire in the history of some nations reduced to desperation.

"What, you will not?" cried Sylvie, advancing on her cousin, and showing her a hideous face full of hatred, and distorted by rage.

Pierrette drew back a step or two to have time to clutch

her letter in her hand, which she kept shut with invincible strength. On seeing this, Sylvie seized Pierrette's delicate white hand in her lobster's claws, and tried to wrench it open. It was a fearful struggle, an infamous struggle, as everything is that dares to attack thought, the only treasure that God has set beyond the reach of power, and keeps as a secret bond between the wretched and Himself.

The two women, one dying, the other full of vigor, looked steadfastly at each other. Pierrette's eyes flashed at her torturer such a look as the Templar's who received on his breast the blows from a mace in the presence of Philippe le Bel. The King could not endure that fearful gleam, and retired appalled by it; Sylvie, a woman, and a jealous woman, answered that magnetic glance by an ominous glare. Awful silence reigned. The Bretonne's clinched fingers resisted her cousin's efforts with the tenacity of a steel vise. Sylvie wrung Pierrette's arm, and tried to open her hand; as this had no effect, she vainly set her nails in the flesh. Finally, madness reinforced her anger; she raised Pierrette's fist to her teeth to bite her fingers and subdue her by pain. Pierrette still defied her with the terrifying gaze of innocence. The old maid's fury was roused to such a pitch that she was blind to all else; gripping Pierrette's arm, she beat the girl's fist on the window-sill, and on the marble chimney-piece, as we beat a nut to crack it and get at the kernel.

"Help, help!" cried Pierrette; "I am being killed."

"So you scream, do you, when I find you with a lover in the middle of the night?"

And she hit again and again without mercy.

"Help, help!" cried Pierrette, whose fist was bleeding.

At this moment there were violent blows on the street door. Both equally exhausted, the two women ceased.

Rogron, aroused and anxious, not knowing what was happening, had got out of bed, gone to his sister's room, and not found her; then he was alarmed, went down and opened the door, and was almost upset by Brigaut, followed by what seemed a phantom.

At the same instant Sylvie's eyes fell on Pierrette's stays; she remembered having felt the papers in them; she threw herself on them like a tiger on his prey, twisted the stays round her hand, and held them up with a smile, as an Iroquois smiles at his foe before scalping him.

"I am dying—" said Pierrette, dropping on her knees. "Who will save me?"

"I will," cried a woman with white hair, turning on Pierrette an aged, parchment face in which a pair of gray eyes sparkled.

"Ah, grandmother, you have come too late!" cried the poor child, melting into tears.

Pierrette went to fall on her bed, bereft of all her strength, and half killed by the reaction, which in a sick girl was inevitable after such a violent struggle. The tall withered apparition took her in her arms as a nurse takes a child, and went out, followed by Brigaut, without saying a word to Sylvie, at whom, by a tragic glance, she hurled majestic accusation. The sight of this dignified old woman in her Breton costume, shrouded in her *coiffe*, which is a sort of long cloak made of black cloth, and accompanied by the terrible Brigaut, appalled Sylvie: she felt as if she had seen death.

She went downstairs, heard the door shut, and found herself face to face with her brother, who said to her, "They have not killed you then?"

"Go to bed," said Sylvie. "To-morrow morning we will see what is to be done."

She got into bed again, unpicked the stays, and read Brigaut's two letters, which utterly confounded her. She went to sleep in the strangest perplexity, never dreaming of the terrible legal action to which her conduct was to give rise.

Brigaut's letter to the widow Lorrain had found her in the greatest joy, which was checkered when she read it. The poor old woman, now past seventy, had been dying of grief at having to live without Pierrette at her side; she only

comforted herself for her loss by the belief that she had sacrificed herself to her grandchild's interests. She had one of those ever-young hearts to which self-sacrifice gives strength and vitality. Her old husband, whose only joy Pierrette had been, had grieved for the child; day after day he had looked for her and missed her. It was an old man's sorrow; the sorrow old men live on, and die of at last.

Everybody can therefore imagine the joy felt by this poor woman, shut up in an almshouse, on hearing of one of those actions which, though rare, still are heard of in France.

After his failure François Joseph Collinet, the head of the house of Collinet, sailed for America with his children. He was a man of too much good feeling to sit down at Nantes, ruined and bereft of credit, in the midst of the disasters caused by his bankruptcy. From 1814 till 1824 this brave merchant, helped by his children and by his cashier, who remained faithful to him and loaned him the money to start again, valiantly worked to make a second fortune. After incredible efforts, that were crowned by success, by the eleventh year he was able to return to Nantes and rehabilitate himself, leaving his eldest son at the head of the American house. He found Madame Lorrain of Pen-Hoël at Saint-Jacques, and beheld the resignation with which the most hapless of his fellow-victims endured her penury.

"God forgive you!" said the old woman, "since you give me on the brink of the grave the means of securing my grandchild's happiness. I, alas! can never see my poor old man's credit re-established."

Monsieur Collinet had brought to his creditor her capital and interest at trade rates, altogether about forty-two thousand francs. His other creditors, active, wealthy, and capable men, had kept themselves above water, while the Lorrains' overthrow had seemed to old Collinet irremediable; he had now promised the widow that he would rehabilitate her husband's good name, finding that it would involve an expenditure of only about forty thousand francs more. When this act of generous restitution became known on 'Change

at Nantes, the authorities were eager to reopen its doors to Collinet before he had surrendered to the Court at Rennes; but the merchant declined the honor, and submitted to all the rigor of the Commercial Code.

Madame Lorrain, then, had received forty-two thousand francs the day before the post brought her Brigaut's letter. As she signed her receipt, her first words were:

"Now I can live with my Pierrette, and let her marry poor Brigaut, who will make a fortune out of my money!"

She could not sit still; she fussed and fidgeted, and wanted to set out for Provins. And when she had read the fatal letter, she rushed out into the town like a mad thing, asking how she could get to Provins with the swiftness of lightning. She set out by mail when she heard of the Governmental rapidity of that conveyance. From Paris she took the Troyes coach; she had arrived at eleven that evening at Frappier's, where Brigaut, seeing the old Bretonne's deep despair, at once promised to fetch her granddaughter, after describing Pierrette's state in a few words. Those few words so alarmed the old woman that she could not control her impatience; she ran out to the Square. When Pierrette screamed, her grandmother's heart was pierced by the cry as keenly as was Brigaut's. The two together would no doubt have roused all the inhabitants, if Rogron, in sheer terror, had not opened the door. This cry of a girl in extremity filled the old woman with strength as great as her horror; she carried her dear Pierrette all the way to Frappier's, where his wife had hastily arranged Brigaut's room for Pierrette's grandmother. So in this miserable lodging, on a bed scarcely made, they laid the poor child; she fainted away, still keeping her hand closed, bruised and bleeding as it was, her nails set in the flesh. Brigaut, Frappier, his wife, and the old woman contemplated Pierrette in silence, all lost in unutterable astonishment.

"Why is her hand covered with blood?" was the grandmother's first question.

Pierrette, overcome by the sleep which follows such an extreme exertion of strength, and knowing that she was safe

from any violence, relaxed her fingers. Brigaut's letter fell out as an answer.

"They wanted to get my letter," said Brigaut, falling on his knees and picking up the note he had written, desiring his little friend to steal softly out of the Rogrons' house. He piously kissed the little martyr's hand.

Then there was a thing which made the joiners shudder: it was the sight of old Madame Lorrain, a sublime spectre, standing by her child's bedside. Horror and vengeance fired with fierce expression the myriad wrinkles that furrowed her skin of ivory yellow; on her brow, shaded by thin gray locks, sat divine wrath. With the powerful intuition granted to the aged as they approach the tomb, she read all Pierrette's life, of which indeed she had been thinking all the way she had come.

She understood the malady that threatened the life of her darling. Two large tears gathered painfully in her gray-and-white eyes, which sorrow had robbed of lashes and eyebrows; two beads of grief that gave a fearful moisture to those eyes, and swelled and rolled over those withered cheeks without wetting them.

"They have killed her!" she said at last, clasping her hands.

She dropped on her knees, which hit two sharp blows on the floor; she was making a vow, no doubt, to Sainte-Anne d'Auray, the most powerful Madonna of Brittany.

"A doctor from Paris," she next said to Brigaut. "Fly there, Brigaut. Go!"

She took the artisan by the shoulders and turned him round with a despotic gesture.

"I was coming at any rate, my good Brigaut," she said, calling him back. "I am rich.—Here!" She untied the ribbon that fastened her bodice across her bosom, took out a paper, in which were wrapped forty-two bank-notes, and said, "Take as much as you need; bring back the greatest doctor in Paris."

"Keep that," said Frappier; "he could not change a bank-note at this hour. I have money; the diligence will

pass presently, he will be sure to find a place in it. But would it not be better first to consult Monsieur Martener, who will give us the name of a Paris physician? The diligence is not due for an hour; we have plenty of time."

Brigaut went off to rouse Monsieur Martener. He brought the doctor back with him, not a little surprised to find Mademoiselle Lorrain at Frappier's. Brigaut described to him the scene that had just taken place at the Rogrons'. The loquacity of a despairing lover threw light on this domestic drama, though the doctor could not suspect its horrors or its extent. Martener gave Brigaut the address of the famous Horace Bianchon, and Jacques and his master left the room on hearing the approach of the diligence.

Monsieur Martener sat down, and began by examining the bruises and wounds on the girl's hand, which hung out of bed.

"She did not hurt herself in such a way," said he.

"No, the dreadful creature I was so unhappy as to trust her with was torturing her," said the grandmother. "My poor Pierrette was crying out, 'Help! Murder!' It was enough to touch the heart of an executioner."

"But why?" said the doctor, feeling Pierrette's pulse. "She is very ill," he went on, bringing the light close to the bed. "We shall hardly save her," said he, after looking at her face. "She must have suffered terribly, and I cannot understand their having left her without care."

"It is my intention," said the old woman, "to appeal to justice. Had these people, who wrote to ask me for my granddaughter, saying that they had twelve thousand francs a year, any right to make her their cook and give her work far beyond her strength?"

"They did not choose to see that she was obviously suffering from one of the ailments to which young girls are sometimes subject, and needed the greatest care!" cried Martener.

Pierrette was roused, partly by the light held by Madame Frappier so as to show her face more clearly, and partly by the dreadful pain in her head, caused by reactionary collapse after her struggle.

"Oh, Monsieur Martener, I am very ill," said she, in her pretty voice.

"Where is the pain, my child?" said the doctor.

"There," she replied, pointing to a spot on her head above the left ear.

"There is an abscess!" cried the doctor, after feeling Pierrette's head for some time, and questioning her as to the pain. "You must tell us everything, my dear, to enable us to cure you. Why is your hand in this state? You did not injure it like this yourself."

Pierrette artlessly told the tale of her struggle with her cousin Sylvie.

"Make her talk to you," said the doctor to her grandmother, "and learn all about it. I will wait till the surgeon arrives from Paris, and we will call in the head surgeon of the hospital for a consultation. It seems to me very serious. I will send a soothing draught to give Mademoiselle some sleep. She needs rest."

The old Bretonne, left alone with her grandchild, made her tell everything, by exerting her influence over her, and explaining to her that she was rich enough for all three, so that Brigaut need never leave them. The poor child confessed all her sufferings, never dreaming of the lawsuit she was leading up to. The monstrous conduct of these two loveless beings, who knew nothing of family affection, revealed to the old woman worlds of torment, as far from her conception as the manners of the savage tribes must have been to the first travellers who penetrated the savannas of America.

Her grandmother's presence, and the certainty of living with her for the future in perfect ease, lulled Pierrette's mind as the draught lulled her body. The old woman watched by her, kissing her brow, hair, and hands, as the holy women may have kissed Jesus while laying Him in the sepulchre.

By nine in the morning Monsieur Martener went to the President of the Courts, and related to him the scene of the past night between Sylvie and Pierrette, the moral and

physical torture, the cruelty of every kind inflicted by the Rogrons on their ward, and the two fatal maladies which had been developed by this ill-usage. The President sent for the notary, Monsieur Auffray, a connection of Pierrette's on her mother's side.

At this moment the war between the Vinet party and the Tiphaine party was at its height. The gossip circulated in Provins by the Rogrons and their adherents as to the well-known *liaison* between Madame Roguin and du Tillet the banker, and the circumstances of Monsieur Roguin's bankruptcy—Madame Tiphaine's father was said to have committed forgery—hit all the more surely because, though it was scandal, it was not calumny. Such wounds pierced to the bottom of things; they attacked self-interest in its most vital part. These statements, repeated to the partisans of Tiphaine by the same speakers who also reported to the Rogrons all the sarcasms uttered by the "beautiful Madame Tiphaine" and her friends, added fuel to their hatred, complicated as it was with political feeling.

The irritation caused in France at that time by party spirit, which had waxed excessively violent, was everywhere bound up, as it was at Provins, with imperilled interests and offended and antagonistic private feelings. Each coterie eagerly pounced on anything that might damage its rival. Party animosity was not less implicated than personal conceit in even trivial questions, which were often carried to great lengths. A whole town threw itself into some dispute, raising it to the dignity of a political contest. And so the President discerned, in the action between Pierrette and the Rogrons, a means of confuting, discrediting, and humiliating the owners of that drawing-room where plots were hatched against the monarchy, and where the Opposition newspaper had had its birth.

He sent for the public prosecutor. Then Monsieur Lesourd, Monsieur Auffray the notary—appointed the legal guardian of Pierrette—and the President of the Court discussed in the greatest privacy, with Monsieur Martener, what

steps could be taken. The legal guardian was to call a family council (a formality of French law), and, armed with the evidence of the three medical men, would demand the dismissal of Rogron from his guardianship. The case thus formulated would be brought before the tribunal, and then Monsieur Lesourd would get it carried into the Criminal Court by demanding an inquiry.

By midday all Provins was in a stir over the strange reports of what had taken place at the Rogrons' in the course of the past night. Pierrette's screams had been remotely heard in the Square, but they had not lasted long; no one had got up; but everybody had asked in the morning, "Did you hear the noise and screaming at about one o'clock? What was it?" Gossip and comment had given such magnitude to the horrible drama that a crowd collected in front of Frappier's shop, everybody cross-questioning the honest joiner, who described the girl's arrival at his house with her hand bleeding and her fingers mangled.

At about one in the afternoon a post-chaise, containing Doctor Bianchon, by whom sat Brigaut, stopped at Frappier's door, and Madame Frappier went off to the hospital to fetch Monsieur Martener and the head surgeon. Thus the reports heard in the town received confirmation.

The Rogrons were accused of having intentionally maltreated their young cousin, and endangered her life. The news reached Vinet at the Law Courts; he left his business and hurried to the Rogrons'. Rogron and his sister had just finished breakfast. Sylvie had avoided telling her brother of her defeat during the night; she allowed him to question her, making no reply but "It does not concern you." And she bustled to and fro between the kitchen and dining-room to avoid all discussion. She was alone when Vinet walked in.

"Do you know nothing of what is going on?" asked the lawyer.

"No," said Sylvie.

"You are going to have a criminal action brought against you for the way in which matters stand with Pierrette. '

"A criminal action!" said Rogron, coming in. "Why? What for?"

"In the first place," said Vinet, looking at Sylvie, "tell me exactly, without subterfuge, all that took place last night, as though you were before God, for there is some talk of cutting off Pierrette's hand."

Sylvie turned ashy pale and shivered.

"Then there was something!" said the lawyer.

Mademoiselle Rogron told the story, trying to justify herself; but on being cross-questioned, related all the details of the horrible conflict.

"If you have only broken her fingers, you will only appear in the Police Court; but if her hand has to be amputated, you will find yourself brought up at the Assizes. The Tiphaines will do anything to get you there."

Sylvie, more dead than alive, confessed her jealousy, and, which was even harder to bring out, how her suspicions had blundered.

"What a case for trial!" exclaimed Vinet. "You and your brother may be ruined by it; you will be thrown over by many of your friends even if you gain it. If you do not come out clear, you will have to leave Provins."

"Oh! my dear Monsieur Vinet—you who are such an able lawyer," cried Rogron, horrified, "advise us, save us!"

Vinet dexterously fomented the fears of these two fools to the utmost, and declared positively that Madame and Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf would hesitate to go to their house again. To be forsaken by these two ladies would be a fatal condemnation. In short, after an hour of magnificent manœuvring, it was agreed that, in order to induce Vinet to save the Rogrons, he must have an interest at stake in defending him in the eyes of all Provins. In the course of the evening Rogron's engagement to marry Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf was to be announced. The banns were to be published on Sunday. The marriage-contract would at once be drawn up by Cournant, and Mademoiselle Rogron would figure in it as abandoning, in consideration of this alliance,

the capital of her share of the estate by a deed of gift to her brother, reserving only a life-interest. Vinet impressed on Rogron and his sister the necessity of having a draft of this deed drawn up two or three days before that event, so as to put Madame and Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf under the necessity, in public opinion, of continuing their visits to the Rogrons.

"Sign that contract, and I will undertake to get you out of the scrape," said the lawyer. "It will no doubt be a hard fight, but I will go into it body and soul, and you will owe me a very handsome taper."

"Yes, indeed," said Rogron.

By half-past eleven the lawyer was empowered to act for them, alike as to the contract and as to the management of the case. At noon the President was informed that a summons was applied for by Vinet against Brigaut and the widow Lorrain for abducting Pierrette Lorrain, a minor, from the domicile of her guardian. Thus the audacious Vinet took up the offensive, putting Rogron in the position of a man having the law on his side. This, indeed, was the tone in which the matter was commented on in the Law Courts. The President postponed hearing the parties till four o'clock. The excitement of the town over all these events need not be described. The President knew that the medical consultation would be ended by three o'clock; he wished that the legal guardian should appear armed with the physicians' verdict.

The announcement of Rogron's engagement to the fair Bathilde de Chargebœuf, and of the deed of gift added by Sylvie to the contract, promptly made the Rogrons two enemies—Mademoiselle Habert and the Colonel, who thus saw all their hopes dashed. Céleste Habert and the Colonel remained ostensibly friends to the Rogrons, but only to damage them more effectually. So, as soon as Monsieur Martener spoke of the existence of an abscess on the brain in the haberdashers' hapless victim, Céleste and the Colonel mentioned the blow Pierrette had given herself that evening when Sylvie had driven her out of the room, and remem-

bered Mademoiselle Rogron's cruel and barbarous remarks. They related various instances of the old maid's utter indifference to her ward's sufferings. Thus these friends of the couple admitted serious wrong, while affecting to defend Sylvie and her brother.

Vinet had foreseen this storm; but Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf was about to acquire the whole of the Rogrons' fortune, and he promised himself that in a few weeks he should see her living in the nice house on the Place, and reign conjointly with her over Provins; for he was already scheming for a coalition with the Bréauteys to serve his own ambitions.

From twelve o'clock till four all the ladies of the Tiphaine faction—the Garcelands, the Guépins, the Julliards, Mesdames Galardon, Guénée, and the sous-préfet's wife—all sent to inquire after Mademoiselle Lorrain. Pierrette knew nothing whatever of this commotion in the town on her behalf. In the midst of acute suffering she felt ineffably happy at finding herself between her grandmother and Brigaut, the objects of her affection. Brigaut's eyes were constantly full of tears, and the old woman petted her beloved grandchild.

God knows the grandmother spared the three men of science none of the details she had heard from Pierrette about her life with the Rogrons! Horace Bianchon expressed his indignation in unmeasured terms. Horrified by such barbarity, he insisted that the other doctors of the town should be called in; so Monsieur Néraud was present, and was requested, as being Rogron's friend, to contradict if he could the terrible inferences derived from the consultation, which, unfortunately for Rogron, were unanimously subscribed to. Néraud, who was already credited with having made Pierrette's maternal grandmother die of grief, was in a false position, of which Martener adroitly took advantage, delighted to overwhelm the Rogrons, and also to compromise Monsieur Néraud, his antagonist. It is needless to give the text of this document, which also was produced at the trial. If the medical terms of Molière's age were barbarous, those

of modern medicine have the advantage of such extreme plain speaking, that an account of Pierrette's maladies, though natural, and unfortunately common, would shock the ear. The verdict was indisputably final, attested by so famous a name as that of Horace Bianchon.

After the Court sitting was over, the President remained in his place, while Pierrette's grandmother came in with Monsieur Auffray, Brigaut, and a considerable crowd. Vinet appeared alone. This contrast struck the spectators, including a vast number of merely inquisitive persons. Vinet, who had kept his gown on, raised his hard face to the President, settling his spectacles as he began in his harsh, sawing tones to set forth that certain strangers had made their way into the house of Monsieur and Mademoiselle Rogron by night, and had carried away the girl Lorrain, a minor. Her guardian claimed the protection of the Court to recover his ward.

Monsieur Auffray, as the guardian appointed by the Court, rose to speak.

"If Monsieur le Président," said he, "will take into his consideration this consultation, signed by one of the most eminent Paris physicians, and by all the doctors and surgeons of Provins, he will perceive how unreasonable is Monsieur Rogron's claim, and what sufficient reasons induced the minor's grandmother to release her at once from her tormentors. The facts are these: A deliberate consultation, signed unanimously by a celebrated Paris doctor, sent for in great haste, and by all the medical authorities of the town, ascribe the almost dying state of the ward to the ill-treatment she had received at the hands of the said Rogron and his sister. As a legal formality a family council will be held, with the least possible delay, and consulted on the question whether the guardian ought not to be held disqualified for his office. We petition that the minor shall not be sent back to her guardian's house, but shall be placed in the hands of any other member of the family whom Monsieur le Président may see fit to designate."

Vinet wanted to reply, saying that the document of the

consultation ought to be communicated to him that he might contravene it.

"Certainly not to Vinet's side," said the President severely, "but perhaps to the public prosecutor. The case is closed."

At the foot of the petition he wrote the following injunction:

"Inasmuch as that by a consultation unanimously signed by the medical faculty of this town and by Doctor Bianchon of the medical faculty of Paris, it is proved that the girl Lorrain, a minor, claimed by her guardian Rogron, is in a very serious state of sickness brought on by the ill-usage and cruelty inflicted on her in the house of her guardian and his sister,

"We, President of the Lower Court of Justice at Provins,

"Decree on the petition, and enjoin that until the family council shall have been held which, as the provisional guardian appointed by the law declares, is at once to be convened, the said minor shall not re-enter her guardian's residence, but shall be transferred to that of the guardian appointed by the law.

"And in the second place, in consideration of the minor's present state of health, and the traces of violence which, in the opinion of the medical men, are to be seen on her person, we commission the chief physician and chief surgeon of the Hospital of Provins to attend her; and in the event of the cruelty being proved to have been constant, we reserve all the rights and powers of the law, without prejudice to the civil action taken by Auffray, the legalized temporary guardian."

This terrible injunction was pronounced by Monsieur le Président Tiphaine with a loud voice and distinct utterance.

"Why not the hulks at once?" said Vinet. "And all this fuss about a little girl who carried on an intrigue with a carpenter's apprentice! If this is the way the case is conducted," he added, insolently, "we shall apply for other judgment on the plea of legitimate suspicions."

Vinet left the Court, and went to the chief leaders of his

party to explain the position of Rogron, who had never given his little cousin a finger-flip, and whom the tribunal had treated, he declared, less as Pierrette's guardian than as the chief voter in Provins.

To hear him, the Tiphaines were making much ado about nothing. The mountain would bring forth a mouse. Sylvie, an eminently religious and well-conducted person, had detected an intrigue between her brother's ward and a carpenter's boy, a Breton named Brigaut. The young rascal knew very well that the girl would have a fortune from her grandmother, and wanted to tamper with her. . . . Vinet to talk of tampering! . . . Mademoiselle Rogron, who had kept the letters in which this little slut's wickedness was made clear, was not so much to blame as the Tiphaines tried to make her seem. Even if she had been betrayed into violence to obtain a letter, which could easily be accounted for by the irritation produced in her by Breton obstinacy, in what was Rogron to blame?

The lawyer thus made the action a party matter, and contrived to give it political color. And so, from that evening, there were differences of opinion on the question.

"If you hear but one bell, you hear but one note," said the wise-heads. "Have you heard what Vinet has to say? He explains the case very well."

Frappier's house was regarded as unsuitable for Pierrette on account of the noise, which would cause her much pain in the head. Her removal from thence to her appointed guardian's house was as desirable from a medical as from a legal point of view. This business was effected with the utmost care, and calculated to make a great sensation. Pierrette was placed on a stretcher with many mattresses, carried by two men, escorted by a Gray Sister holding in her hand a bottle of ether, followed by her grandmother, Brigaut, Madame Auffray, and her maid. The people stood at the windows and in the doors to see the little procession pass. No doubt the state in which Pierrette was seen and her

death-like pallor gave immense support to the party adverse to the Rogrons. The Auffrays were bent on showing to all the town how right the President had been in pronouncing his injunction. Pierrette and her grandmother were established on the second floor of Monsieur Auffray's house. The notary and his wife lavished on them the generosity of the amplest hospitality; they made a display of it. Pierrette was nursed by her grandmother, and Monsieur Martener came to see her again the same evening, with the surgeon.

From that evening dated much exaggeration on both sides. The Rogrons' room was crowded. Vinet had worked up the Liberal faction in the matter. The two Chargebœuf ladies dined with the Rogrons, for the marriage-contract was to be signed forthwith. Vinet had had the banns put up at the Mairie that morning. He treated the business of Pierrette as a mere trifle, If the Court of Provins could not judge it dispassionately, the superior Court would judge of the facts, said he, and the Auffrays would think twice before rushing into such an action. Then the connection between the Rogrons and the Chargebœufs was of immense weight with certain people. To them the Rogrons were as white as snow, and Pierrette an excessively wicked little girl whom they had cherished in their bosom.

In Madame Tiphaine's drawing-room vengeance was taken on the horrible scandals the Vinet party had promulgated for the last two years. The Rogrons were monsters, and the guardian would find himself in the Criminal Court. In the Square, Pierrette was perfectly well; in the upper town, she must infallibly die; at the Rogrons', she had a few scratches on her hand; at Madame Tiphaine's, she had her fingers smashed; one would have to be cut off.

Next day the "Courrier de Provins" had an extremely clever article, well written, a masterpiece of innuendo mixed up with legal demurs, which placed the Rogrons above suspicion. The "Ruche," issued two days later, could not reply without risk of libel; but it said that in a case like the present, the best thing was to leave justice to take its course.

The family council was constituted by the Justice of the Peace of the Provins district, as the legal President, in the first place, of Rogron and the two Auffrays, Pierrette's next of kin; then of Monsieur Ciprey, a nephew of Pierrette's maternal grandmother. He added to these Monsieur Habert, the young girl's director, and Colonel Gouraud, who had always given himself out to be a comrade of her father's, Colonel Lorrain. The Justice's impartiality was highly applauded in including in this family council Monsieur Habert and the Colonel, whom all the town regarded as great friends of the Rogrons. In the difficult position in which he found himself, Rogron begged to be allowed the support of Maître Vinet on the occasion. By this manœuvre, evidently suggested by Vinet, he succeeded in postponing the meeting of the family council till the end of December.

At that date the President and his wife were in Paris, living with Madame Roguin, in consequence of the sitting of the Chambers. Thus the Ministerial party at Provins was bereft of its head. Vinet had already quietly made friends with the worthy examining judge, Monsieur Desfondrilles, in case the business should assume the penal or criminal aspect that Tiphaine had endeavored to give it.

For three hours Vinet addressed the family council; he proved an intrigue between Brigaut and Pierrette, to justify Mademoiselle Rogron's severity; he pointed out how natural it was that the guardian should have left his ward under the control of a woman; he dwelt on his client's non-interference in the mode of Pierrette's education as conducted by Sylvie. But in spite of Vinet's efforts, the meeting unanimously decided on abolishing Rogron's guardianship. Monsieur Auffray was appointed Pierrette's guardian, and Monsieur Ciprey her legal guardian.

They heard the evidence given by Adèle the maid, who incriminated her former master and mistress; by Mademoiselle Habert, who repeated Sylvie's cruel remarks the evening when Pierrette had given herself the dreadful blow that everybody had heard, and the comments on Pierrette's

health made by Madame de Chargebœuf. Brigaut produced the letter he had received from Pierrette, which established their innocence. It was proved that the deplorable state in which the minor now was resulted from the neglect of her guardian, who was responsible in all that related to his ward. Pierrette's illness had struck everybody, even persons in the town who did not know the family. Thus the charge of cruelty against Rogron was fully sustained. The matter would be made public.

By Vinet's advice Rogron put in a protest against the confirmation by the Court of the decision of the family council. The Minister of Justice now intervened, in consequence of the increasingly critical condition of Pierrette Lorrain. This singular case, though put on the lists forthwith, did not come up for trial till near the month of March, 1828.

By that time the marriage of Rogron to Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf was an accomplished fact. Sylvie was living on the second floor of the house, which had been arranged to accommodate her and Madame de Chargebœuf; for the first floor was entirely given up to Madame Rogron. The beautiful Madame Rogron now succeeded to the beautiful Madame Tiphaine. The effect of this marriage was enormous. The town no longer came to Mademoiselle Sylvie's salon, but to the beautiful Madame Rogron's.

Monsieur Tiphaine, the President of the Provins Court, pushed by his mother-in-law, and supported by du Tillet and by Nucingen, the Royalist bankers, found an opportunity of being useful to the Ministry. He was one of the most highly respected speakers of the Centre, was made a judge of the Lower Court in the Seine district, and got his nephew Lesourd nominated President in his place at Provins. This appointment greatly annoyed Monsieur Desfondrilles, still an archæologist, and more supernumerary than ever. The Keeper of the Seals sent a protégé of his own to fill Lesourd's place. Thus Monsieur Tiphaine's promotion did not lead to any advancement in the legal forces at Provins.

Vinet took advantage of these circumstances very clev-

erly. He had always told the good folks of Provins that they were only serving as a step-ladder to Madame Tiphaine's cunning and ambition. The President laughed in his sleeve at his friends. Madame Tiphaine secretly disdained the town of Provins; she would never come back to it.

Monsieur Tiphaine *père* presently died; his son inherited the estate of le Fay, and sold his handsome house in the upper town to Monsieur Julliard. This sale showed how little he intended to come back to Provins. Vinet was right! Vinet had been a true prophet! These facts had no little influence on the action relating to Rogron's guardianship.

The horrible martyrdom so brutally inflicted on Pierrette by two imbecile tyrants—which led medically speaking, to her being subjected by Monsieur Martener, with Bianchon's approval, to the terrible operation of trepanning; the whole dreadful drama, reduced to judicial statements, was left among the foul medley known to lawyers as outstanding cases. The action dragged on through the delays and inextricable intricacies of "proceedings," constantly checked by the quibbles of a contemptible lawyer, while the calumniated Pierrette languished in suffering from the most terrible pains known to medical science. We could not avoid these details as to the strange variations in public opinion and the slow march of justice, before returning to the room where she was living—where she was dying.

Monsieur Martener and the whole of the Auffray family were in a very few days completely won by Pierrette's adorable temper, and by the old Bretonne, whose feelings, ideas, and manners bore the stamp of an antique Roman type. This matron of the Marais was like one of Plutarch's women.

The doctor desired to contend with Death, at least, for his prey; for from the first the Paris and the provincial physicians had agreed in regarding Pierrette as past saving. Then began between the disease and the doctor, aided by Pierrette's youth, one of those struggles which medical men alone know;

the reward, in the event of success, is neither in the pecuniary profit, nor even in the rescued sufferer; it lies in sweet satisfaction of conscience, and in a sort of ideal and invisible palm of victory gathered by every true artist from the joyful certainty of having achieved a fine work. The physician makes for healing as the artist makes for the beautiful, urged on by a noble sentiment which we call virtue. This daily recurring battle had extinguished in this man, though a provincial, the squalid irritation of the warfare going on between the Vinet party and that of the Tiphaines, as happens with men who have to fight it out with great suffering.

Monsieur Martener had at first wished to practice his profession in Paris; but the activity of the great city, the callousness produced at last in a doctor's mind by the terrific number of sick people and the multitude of serious cases, had appalled his gentle soul, which was made for a country life. He was in bondage, too, to his pretty birthplace. So he had come back to Provins to marry and settle there, and take almost tender care of a population he could think of as a large family. All the time Pierrette was ill he could not bear to speak of her illness. His aversion to reply when every one asked for news of the poor child was so evident that at last nobody questioned him about her. Pierrette was to him what she could not help being—one of those deep, mysterious poems, immense in its misery, such as occur in the terrible life of a physician. He had for this frail girl an admiration of which he would betray the secret to no one.

This feeling for his patient was infectious, as all true sentiments are; Monsieur and Madame Auffray's house, so long as Pierrette lived in it, was peaceful and still. Even the children, who of old had had such famous games with Pierrette, understood, with childlike grace, that they were not to be noisy or troublesome. They made it a point of honor to be good because Pierrette was ill.

Monsieur Auffray's house is in the upper town, below the ruined castle; built, indeed, on one of the cliff-like knolls

formed by the overthrow of the old ramparts. From thence the residents have a view over the valley as they walk in a little orchard supported by the thick walls rising straight up from the lower town. The roofs of the houses rise to the level of the wall that upholds this garden. Along this terrace is a walk ending at the glass-door of Monsieur Auffray's study. At the other end are a vine-covered arbor and a fig-tree, sheltering a round table, a bench, and some chairs, all painted green.

Pierrette had a room over that of her new guardian. Madame Lorrain slept there on a camp-bed by her grandchild's side. From her window Pierrette could see the beautiful valley of Provins, which she hardly knew—she had so rarely been out of the Rogrons' sinister dwelling. Whenever it was fine, she liked to drag herself, on her grandmother's arm, as far as this arbor. Brigaut, who now did no work, came three times a day to see his little friend; he was absorbed in grief, which made him indifferent to life; he watched for Monsieur Martener with the eagerness of a spaniel, always went in with him and came out with him.

It would be difficult to imagine all the follies every one was ready to commit for the dear little invalid. Her grandmother, drunk with grief, hid her despair; she showed the child the same smiling face as at Pen-Hoel. In her wish to delude herself, she made her a Breton cap such as Pierrette had worn when she came to Provins, and put it on her; the girl then looked to her more like herself; she was sweet to behold, with her face framed in the aureole of cambric edged with starched lace. Her face, as white as fine white porcelain, her forehead on which suffering set a semblance of deep thoughtfulness, the purity of outline refined by sickness, the slowness and occasional fixity of her gaze, all made Pierrette a master-work of melancholy.

The child was waited on with fanatical devotion; she was so tender, so loving. Madame Martener had sent her piano to Madame Auffray, her sister, thinking it might amuse Pierrette, to whom music was rapture. It was a poem to

watch her listening to a piece by Weber, Beethoven, or Hérold, her eyes raised to heaven in silence, regretting, no doubt, the life she felt slipping from her. Monsieur Péroux the curé and Monsieur Habert, her two priestly comforters, admired her pious resignation.

Is it not a strange fact, worthy of the attention alike of philosophers and of mere observers, that a sort of seraphic perfection is characteristic of youths and maidens marked amid the crowd with the red cross of death, like saplings in a forest? He who has witnessed such a death can never remain or become an infidel. These beings exhale, as it were, a heavenly fragrance, their looks speak of God, their voice is eloquent in the most trivial speech, and often sounds like a divine instrument, expressing the secrets of futurity. When Monsieur Martener congratulated Pierrette on having carried out some disagreeable prescription, this angel would say in the presence of all, and with what a look!—

"I wish to live, dear Monsieur Martener, less for my own sake than for my grandmother's, for my poor Brigaut's, and for you all, who will be sorry when I die."

The first time she took a walk, in the month of November, under a bright Martinmas sun, escorted by all the family, Madame Auffray asked her if she were tired.

"Now that I have nothing to bear but the pain God sends me, I can endure it. I find strength to bear suffering in the joy of being loved."

This was the only time she ever alluded, even so remotely, to her horrible martyrdom at the Rogrons'; she never spoke of them; and as the remembrance could not fail to be painful, no one mentioned their name.

"Dear Madame Auffray," said she one day at noon on the terrace, while gazing at the valley lighted up by brilliant sunshine and dressed in the russet tints of autumn, "my dying days in your house will have brought me more happiness than all the three years before."

Madame Auffray looked at her sister, Madame Martener, and said to her in a whisper:

"How she would have loved!"

And, indeed, Pierrette's tone and look gave her words unutterable meaning.

Monsieur Martener kept up a correspondence with Doctor Bianchon, and tried no serious treatment without his approbation. He hoped first to restore the girl to normal health, and then to enable the abscess to discharge itself through the ear. The more acute her pain was, the more hopeful he felt. With regard to the first point he had some success, and that was a great triumph. For some days Pierrette recovered her appetite, and could satisfy it with substantial food, for which her unhealthy state had hitherto given her great aversion; her color improved, but the pain in her head was terrible. The doctor now begged the great physician, his consultee, to come to Provins. Bianchon came, stayed two days, and advised an operation; he threw himself into all poor Martener's anxiety, and went himself to fetch the famous Desplein. So the operation was performed by the greatest surgeon of ancient or modern times; but this terrible augur said to Martener as he went away with Bianchon, his best-beloved pupil:

"You can save her only by a miracle. As Horace has told you, necrosis has set in. At that age the bones are still so tender."

The operation was performed early in March, 1828. All that month Monsieur Martener, alarmed by the fearful torments Pierrette endured, made several journeys to Paris; he consulted Desplein and Bianchon, to whom he even suggested a treatment resembling that known as lithotrity—the insertion of a tubular instrument into the skull, by which a heroic remedy might be introduced to arrest the progress of decay. The daring Desplein dared not attempt this surgical feat, which only despair had suggested to Martener.

When the doctor returned from his last journey to Paris, his friends thought him crestfallen and gloomy. One fatal evening he was compelled to announce to the Auffray family, to Madame Lorrain, to the confessor, and to Brigaut, who

were all present, that science could do no more for Pierrette, that her life was in the hands of God alone. Her grandmother took a vow and begged the curé to say, every morning at daybreak, before Pierrette rose, a mass which she and Brigaut would attend.

The case came up for trial. While the Rogrons' victim lay dying, Vinet was calumniating her to the Court. The Court ratified the decision of the family council, and the lawyer immediately appealed. The newly appointed public prosecutor delivered an address which led to an inquiry. Rogron and his sister were obliged to find sureties to avoid being sent to prison. The inquiry necessitated the examination of Pierrette herself. When Monsieur Desfrondrilles went to the Auffrays' house, Pierrette was actually dying; the priest was at her bedside, and she was about to take the last sacrament. At that moment she was entreating all the assembled family to forgive her cousins as she herself forgave them, saying, with excellent good sense, that judgment in such cases belonged to God alone.

"Grandmother," said she, "leave all you possess to Brigaut"—Brigaut melted into tears—"and," Pierrette went on, "give a thousand francs to good Adèle, who used to warm my bed on the sly. If she had stayed with my cousins, I should be alive . . ."

It was at three o'clock on Easter Tuesday, on a beautiful day, that this little angel ceased to suffer. Her heroical grandmother insisted on sitting by her all night with the priests, and sewing her winding-sheet on her with her old hands. Toward evening Brigaut left the house and went back to Frappier's.

"I need not ask you the news, my poor boy," said the carpenter.

"Père Frappier—yes; it is all over with her, and not with me!"

The apprentice looked round the workshop at all the wood store with gloomy but keen eyes.

"I understand, Brigaut," said the worthy Frappier.

"There—that is what you want," and he pointed to some two-inch oak planks.

"Do not help me, Monsieur Frappier," said the Breton. "I will do it all myself."

Brigaut spent the night in planing and joining Pierrette's coffin, and more than once he ripped off with one stroke a long shaving wet with his tears. His friend Frappier smoked and watched him. He said nothing to him but these few words when his man put the four sides together:

"Make the lid to slide in a groove, then her poor friends will not hear you nail it down."

At daybreak Brigaut went for lead to line the coffin. By a singular coincidence the sheets of lead cost exactly the sum he had given to Pierrette for her journey from Nantes to Provins. The brave Breton, who had borne up under the dreadful pain of making a coffin for the beloved companion of his childhood, overlaying each funereal board with all his memories, could not endure this coincidence; he turned faint, and could not carry the lead; the plumber accompanied him, and offered to go with him and solder down the top sheet as soon as the body should be laid in the coffin.

The Breton burned his plane and all the tools he had used for the work, he wound up his accounts with Frappier, and bade him good-by.

The heroism which enabled the poor fellow, like the grandmother, to busy himself with doing the last services to the dead, led to his intervening in the crowning scene which put a climax to the Rogrons' tyranny.

Brigaut and the plumber arrived at Monsieur Auffray's just in time to decide by brute force a horrible and shameful legal question. The chamber of the dead was full of people, and presented a strange scene to the two workmen. The Rogrons stood hideous by the victim's corpse to torture it even in death. The body of the poor girl, sublime in its beauty, lay on her grandmother's camp-bed. Pierrette's

eyes were closed, her hair smoothly braided, her body sewn into a winding-sheet of coarse cotton.

By this bed, her hair in disorder, on her knees with outstretched hands and a flaming face, old Madame Lorrain was crying out:

"No, no; it shall never be!"

At the foot of the bed were the guardian Monsieur Auffray, the curé Monsieur Péroux, and Monsieur Habert. Tapers were still burning. Opposite the grandmother stood the hospital surgeon and Monsieur Néraud, supported by the smooth-tongued and formidable Vinet. A registrar was present. The surgeon had on his dissecting apron; one of his assistants had opened his roll of instruments and was handing him a scalpel.

This scene was disturbed by the noise made by the fall of the coffin, which Brigaut and the plumber dropped; and by Brigaut himself, who, entering first, was seized with horror on seeing old Madame Lorrain in tears.

"What is the matter?" asked Brigaut, placing himself by her side, and convulsively clutching a chisel he had brought with him.

"The matter!" said the old woman. "They want to open my child's body, to split her skull—to rend her heart after her death as they did in her lifetime!"

"Who?" said Brigaut, in a voice to crack the drum of the lawyer's ears.

"The Rogrons."

"By the God above us—!"

"One moment, Brigaut," said Monsieur Auffray, seeing the Breton brandish his chisel.

"Monsieur Auffray," said Brigaut, as pale as the dead girl, "I listen to you because you are Monsieur Auffray. But at this moment I would not listen to—"

"Justice!" Auffray put in.

"Is there such a thing as Justice?" cried Brigaut. "That—that is Justice!" he went on, threatening the lawyer, the surgeon, and the clerk with his chisel that flashed in the sunlight.

"My good fellow," said the curé, "Monsieur Rogron's lawyer has appealed to Justice. His client lies under a serious accusation, and it is impossible to refuse a suspected person the means of clearing himself. According to Monsieur Rogron's advocate, if this poor child died of the abscess on the brain, her former guardian must be regarded as guiltless; for it is proved that Pierrette for a long time concealed the blow she had given herself—"

"That will do!" said Brigaut.

"My client—" Vinet began.

"Your client," cried the Breton, "shall go to hell, and I to the scaffold; for if one of you makes an attempt to touch her whom your client killed—if that sawbones does not put his knife away, I will strike him dead."

"This is overt resistance," said Vinet; "we shall lay it before the Court."

The five strangers withdrew.

"Oh, my son!" said the old woman, starting up and throwing her arms round Brigaut's neck, "let us bury her at once; they will come back."

"When once the lead is soldered," said the plumber, "perhaps they will not dare."

Monsieur Auffray hurried off to his brother-in-law, Monsieur Lesourd, to try to get this matter settled. Vinet wished for nothing better. Pierrette once dead, the action as to the guardianship, which was not yet decided, must die a natural death, without any possibility of argument either for or against the Rogrons; the question remained an open one. So the shrewd lawyer had perfectly foreseen the effect his demand would produce.

At noon Monsieur Desfondrilles reported to the Bench on the inquiry relating to the Rogrons, and the Court pronounced a verdict of no case, on self-evident grounds.

Rogron dared not show his face at Pierrette's funeral, though all the town was present. Vinet tried to drag him there; but the ex-haberdasher feared the excitement of universal reprobation.

Brigaut, after seeing the grave filled up in which Pierrette was laid, left Provins and went on foot to Paris. He addressed a petition to the Dauphiness to be allowed, in consideration of his father's name, to enlist in the Royal Guard, and was soon afterward enrolled. When an expedition was fitted out for Algiers, he again wrote to the Dauphiness, begging to be ordered on active service. He was then sergeant; Marshal Bourmont made him sub-lieutenant of the Line. The Major's son behaved like a man seeking death. But death has hitherto respected Jacques Brigaut, who has distinguished himself in all the recent expeditions without being once wounded. He is now at the head of a battalion in the Line. There is not a more taciturn or a better officer. Off duty he is speechless, walks alone, and lives like a machine. Every one understands and respects some secret sorrow. He has forty-six thousand francs, left him by old Madame Lorrain, who died in Paris in 1829.

Vinet was elected député in 1830, and the services he has done to the new Government have earned him the place of Prosecutor-General. His influence is now so great that he will always be returned as député. Rogron is Receiver-General in the town where Vinet exercises his high functions, and by a singular coincidence Monsieur Tiphaine is the chief President of the Supreme Court there; for the Judge unhesitatingly attached himself to the new dynasty of July. The ex-beautiful Madame Tiphaine lives on very good terms with the beautiful Madame Rogron. Vinet and President Tiphaine agree perfectly.

As to Rogron, utterly stupid, he says such things as this—

"Louis Philippe will never be really King till he can create nobles."

This speech is obviously not his own.

His failing health allows Madame Rogron to hope that ere long she may be free to marry General the Marquis de Montriveau, a peer of France, who is Governor of the department, and attentive to her. Vinet is always in a hurry to condemn a man to death; he never believes in the innocence

of the accused. This man, born to be a public prosecutor, is considered one of the most amiable men of his district, and is not less successful in Paris and in the Chamber; at Court he is the exquisite courtier.

General Baron Gouraud, that noble relic of our glorious armies, has married—as Vinet promised that he should—a Demoiselle Matifat, five-and-twenty years of age, the daughter of a druggist in the Rue des Lombards, who had a fortune of fifty thousand crowns. He is Governor—as Vinet prophesied—of a department close to Paris. He was made a peer of France as the reward of his conduct in the riots under Casimir Périer's Ministry. Baron Gouraud was one of the generals who took the Church of Saint-Merry, delighted to "rap the knuckles" of the civilians who had bullied them for fifteen years; and his zeal won him the Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honor.

None of those who were implicated in Pierrette's death have any remorse. Monsieur Desfondrilles is still an archæologist; but, to promote his own election, Attorney-General Vinet took care to have him appointed President of the Court. Sylvie holds a little court, and manages her brother's affairs; she lends at high interest, and does not spend more than twelve hundred francs a year.

From time to time, in the little Square, when some son of Provins comes home from Paris to settle there, and is seen coming out of Mademoiselle Rogron's house, some former partisan of the Tiphaines will say, "The Rogrons had a very sad affair once about a ward . . ."

"A mere party question," President Desfondrilles replies. "Monstrous tales were given out. Out of kindness of heart they took this little Pierrette to live with them, a nice child enough, without a penny; just as she was growing up she had some intrigue with a joiner's apprentice, and would come to her window barefoot to talk to the lad, who used to stand just there, do you see? The lovers sent each other notes by means of a string. As you may suppose, in her state, and in the months of October and November, that was quite

enough to upset a little pale-faced girl. The Rogrons behaved admirably; they never claimed their share of the child's inheritance; they gave everything to the grandmother. The moral of it all, my friends, is that the devil always punishes us for a good action."

"Oh! this is quite another story; old Frappier told it in a very different way!"

"Old Frappier consults his cellar more than his memory," remarked a frequenter of Mademoiselle Rogron's drawing-room.

"But then old Monsieur Habert—"

"Oh! you know about his share in the matter?"

"No."

"Why, he wanted to get his sister married to Monsieur Rogron, the Receiver-General."

Two men daily think of Pierrette—Doctor Martener and Major Brigaut, who alone know the terrible truth.

To give that truth immense proportions, it is enough to recall the fact that if we change the scene to the Middle Ages, and to the vast theatre of Rome, a sublime girl, Beatrice Cenci, was dragged to the scaffold for reasons and by intrigues almost the same as those which brought Pierrette to the tomb. Beatrice Cenci found none to defend her but an artist—a painter. And to-day history and living people, on the evidence of Guido Reni's portrait, condemn the Pope, and regard Beatrice as one of the most pathetic victims of infamous passions and factions.

And we may agree that the law would be a fine thing for social roguery, if there were no God.

November, 1830.

THE ABBÉ BIROTTEAU

TO DAVID, SOULPTOR

The duration of the work on which I write your name—doubly illustrious in our age—is most uncertain, while you inscribe mine on bronze, which outlives nations even when stamped only by the vulgar die of the coiner. Will not numismatists be puzzled by the many crowned heads in your studio, when they find among the ashes of Paris these lives, prolonged by you beyond the lives of nations, in which they will fancy they discover dynasties? Yours is this divine prerogative—mine be the gratitude. *De Balzac.*

IN THE early autumn of 1826 the Abbé Birotteau, the principal personage of this story, was caught in a shower on his way home from the house where he had spent the evening. He was just crossing, as fast as his burly weight permitted, a little deserted square known as the Close, lying behind the apse of Saint-Gatien at Tours.

The Abbé Birotteau, a short man of apoplectic build, and now sixty years of age, had already had several attacks of gout. Hence, of all the minor miseries of human life, that which the worthy man held in most horror was the sudden wetting of his shoes with their large silver buckles, and the immersion of their soles. In fact, notwithstanding the flannel lining in which he packed his feet in all weathers, with the care a priest always takes of himself, they often got a little damp; then, next day, the gout unfailingly gave him proof of its constancy.

However, as the cobbles in the Close are always dry, and as the Abbé had won three francs and ten sous at whist from Madame de Listomère, he submitted to the rain with resignation from the middle of the Place de l'Archevêché, where it had begun to fall heavily. Moreover, at this moment he was brooding over his chimera, a longing already twelve years old, a priest's day-dream! A dream which, recurring every evening, now seemed likely to find fulfilment; in short, he was too well wrapped in the fur sleeves of a canon's robes to be sensitive to the severities of the weather. In the course of this evening the accustomed guests who met at Madame de Listomère's had as good as promised him a nomination to the canon's stall at present vacant in the Metropolitan Chapter of Saint-Gatien, by proving to him that no one better deserved it than he, whose claims were indisputable, though so long ignored. If he had lost at cards, if he had heard that the canonry was given to the Abbé Poirel, his rival, the good man would have found the rain very cold; he might have abused life. But he was in one of those rare moments when delightful sensations make us forget everything. Though he hastened his pace, it was in obedience to a mechanical impulse, and truth—so indispensable in a tale of domestic life—requires us to say that he was thinking neither of the shower nor of the gout.

There were formerly round this Close, on the side by the Grand' Rue, a number of houses standing within a wall, and belonging to the Cathedral, inhabited by certain dignitaries of the Chapter. Since the sequestration of ecclesiastical property, the town has taken the alley dividing these houses as a public way, by the name of Rue de la Psalette, leading from the Close to the High Street. The name itself shows that here formerly dwelt the precentor with his schools and those who were within his jurisdiction. The left side of the street is formed of one large house, its garden walls being bridged by the flying buttresses of Saint-Gatien, which spring from the ground of its strip of garden, making it

doubtful whether the Cathedral were built before or after that ancient dwelling. But by examining the moldings and the shape of the windows, the arch of the doorway, and the external architecture of the house, darkened by time, an archæologist detects that it had always been part and parcel of the magnificent church to which it is wedded. An antiquarian—if there were one at Tours, one of the least literary towns of France—might even discern at the entrance to the passage from the Close some traces of the covered archway which of old served as an entry to these priestly dwellings, and which must have harmonized in character with the main edifice.

This house, being to the north of Saint-Gatien, lies always in the shadow of this vast Cathedral, on which time has cast its gloomy mantle, stamped wrinkles, and set its damp chill, its mosses, and straggling weeds. And it is perennially wrapped in the deepest silence, broken only by the tolling of the bells, the chanted service heard through the Cathedral walls, or the cawing of jackdaws nesting at the top of the belfries. The spot is a desert of masonry, a solitude full of individuality, in which none could dwell but beings absolutely mindless, or gifted with immense strength of soul.

The house in question had always been the home of Abbés, and belonged to an old maid named Mademoiselle Gamard. Although during the Terror the property had been bought from the nation by Mademoiselle Gamard's father, as the worthy maiden had for twenty years past let the rooms to priests, no one, at the Restoration, could take it ill that a bigot should not surrender a piece of national property; religious persons may have supposed that she meant to bequeath it to the Chapter, and the worldly saw no change in its uses.

It was to this house, then, that the Abbé Birotteau was making his way; he had lived in it for two years. His rooms there had been till then, as the canonry was now, the object of his desires, and his *hoc erat in votis* for a dozen years be-

fore. To board with Mademoiselle Gamard and to be made a canon were the two great aims of his life; and perhaps they completely sum up the ambitions of a priest who, regarding himself as a pilgrim to eternity, can in this world wish for no more than a good room, a good table, clean clothes, shoes with silver buckles—all-sufficient for his animal needs—and a canonry to satisfy his pride, the indefinable feeling which will accompany us, no doubt, into the presence of God, since there are grades of rank among the saints.

But the Abbé Birotteau's desire for the rooms he now occupied, so trivial a feeling in the eyes of the worldly wise, had been to him a perfect passion, a passion full of obstacles, and, like the most criminal passions, full of hopes, joys, and remorse.

The arrangements and space in her house did not allow Mademoiselle Gamard to take more than two resident boarders. Now, about twelve years before the day when Birotteau went to lodge with this maiden lady, she had undertaken to preserve in health and contentment Monsieur l'Abbé Troubert and Monsieur l'Abbé Chapeloud. The Abbé Troubert still lived, the Abbé Chapeloud was dead, and Birotteau had been his immediate successor.

The late Abbé Chapeloud, in his lifetime Canon of Saint-Gatien, had been the Abbé Birotteau's intimate friend. Every time the priest had gone into the canon's rooms he had unfailingly admired them, the furniture, and the books. This admiration one day gave birth to a desire to possess these fine things. The Abbé Birotteau had found it impossible to smother this desire, which often made him dreadfully unhappy when he reflected that only the death of his best friend could satisfy this hidden covetousness, which nevertheless constantly increased.

The Abbé Chapeloud and his friend Birotteau were not rich. Both sons of peasants, they had nothing but the poor emolument doled out to priests, and their small savings had been spent in tiding over the evil days of the Revolution. When Napoleon re-established Catholic worship, the Abbé

Chapeloud was made canon of Saint-Gatien, and the Abbé Birotteau became *vicaire*, or mass-priest, of the Cathedral. It was then that Chapeloud went to board with Mademoiselle Gamard. When Birotteau first called on the canon in his new residence, he thought the rooms delightfully arranged, but that was all. The beginnings of this concupiscence for furniture were like those of a real passion in a young man, which often at first is no more than cold admiration of the woman he subsequently loves forever.

These rooms, reached by a stone staircase, were on the side of the house looking south. The Abbé Troubert inhabited the ground floor, and Mademoiselle Gamard the first floor of the main front to the street. When Chapeloud went in, the rooms were bare and the ceilings blackened by smoke. The chimney fronts, clumsily carved in stone, had never been painted. All the furniture the poor canon could at first put in consisted of a bed, a table, some chairs, and his few books. The apartment was like a fine woman in rags.

But two or three years later, an old lady having left the Abbé Chapeloud two thousand francs, he laid out the money in the purchase of an oak bookcase, saved from the destruction of an old chateau pulled down by the *Bande noire* (a company who bought old buildings to demolish), and remarkable for carvings worthy of the admiration of artists. The Abbé made the purchase, fascinated less by its cheapness than by its exact correspondence in size with the dimensions of his corridor. His savings then allowed him completely to restore this corridor, until now abandoned to neglect. The floor was carefully waxed, the ceiling whitewashed, the woodwork painted and grained to imitate the tone and knots of oak. A marble chimney-shelf replaced the old one. The Canon had taste enough to hunt up and find some old armchairs of carved walnut wood. Then a long ebony table and two little Boulle cabinets gave this library a finish full of character.

Within two years, the liberality of various devout persons, and the bequests of pious penitents, though small, had

filled the shelves of the bookcase hitherto vacant. Finally, an uncle of Chapeloud's, an old Oratorian, left him his collection in folio of the "Fathers of the Church," and several other large works of value to an ecclesiastic.

Birotteau, more and more surprised by the successive transformations in this formerly bare corridor, by degrees became involuntarily covetous. He longed to possess this study, so perfectly adapted to the gravity of priestly habits. This passion grew day by day. Spending whole days, as he often did, in working in this snuggery, he could appreciate the silence and peace of it, after having at first admired its comfortable arrangement. For the next few years the Abbé Chapeloud used this retreat as an oratory, which his lady friends delighted to embellish. Later, again, a lady presented to the Canon a piece of furniture in worsted work for his bedroom, at which she had long been stitching under the amiable priest's eyes without his suspecting its purpose. Then Birotteau was as much dazzled by the bedroom as by the library.

Finally, three years before his death, the Abbé Chapeloud had completed the comfort of his rooms by decorating the drawing-room. Though simply furnished with red Utrecht velvet, this had been too much for Birotteau. From the day when the Canon's friend first saw the red silk curtains, the mahogany furniture, the Aubusson carpet that graced this large room, freshly painted, Chapeloud's apartment became to him the object of a secret monomania. To live there, to sleep in the great bed with silk curtains in which the Canon slept, and have all his comforts about him as Chapeloud had, seemed to Birotteau perfect happiness; he looked for nothing beyond. Every feeling which envy and ambition arouse in the souls of other men was, in that of the Abbé Birotteau, centred in the deep and secret longing with which he wished for a home like that created for himself by the Abbé Chapeloud. When his friend fell ill, it was no doubt sincere affection that brought Birotteau to see him; but on first hearing of the Canon's sickness, and while sitting with him, there

rose from the depths of his soul a thousand thoughts, of which the simplest formula was always this, "If Chapeloud dies, I can have his rooms." Still, as Birotteau had a good heart, strict principles, and a narrow intellect, he never went so far as to conceive of means for getting his friend to leave him his library and furniture.

The Abbé Chapeloud, an amiable and indulgent egoist, guessed his friend's mania—which it was not difficult to do, and forgave it—which for a priest would seem less easy. Still, Birotteau, whose friendship remained unaltered, never ceased to walk day after day with the Canon up and down the same path in the Mall at Tours without curtailing by a single minute the time devoted to this exercise for the last twenty years. Birotteau thought of his involuntary wishes as sins, and would have been capable, in sheer contrition, of the utmost devotion for Chapeloud's sake.

The Canon paid his debt to this sincere and artless brotherliness by saying, a few days before his death, to the priest, who was reading to him from the "Quotidienne": "You will get the rooms this time. I feel that it is all over with me."

In fact, by his will, the Abbé Chapeloud left his library and furniture to Birotteau. The possession of these much-longed-for things, and the prospect of being taken as a boarder by Mademoiselle Gamard, greatly softened Birotteau's grief at the loss of his friend the Canon. He would not perhaps have called him to life again, but he wept for him. For several days he was like Gargantua, whose wife died in giving birth to Pantagruel, and who knew not whether to rejoice over his son's birth or to lament at having buried his good Badebec, and made the mistake of rejoicing at his wife's death and deploring the birth of Pantagruel.

The Abbé Birotteau spent the first days of his grief in verifying the volumes of *his* library, and enjoying the use of *his* furniture, examining them, and saying in a tone, which, unfortunately, could not be recorded, "Poor Chapeloud!"

In short, his joy and his grief were so absorbing that he felt no distress at seeing the canonry bestowed on another, though the lamented Chapeloud had always hoped that Birotteau might be his successor. Mademoiselle Gamard received the Abbé with pleasure as a boarder, and he thus enjoyed thenceforth all the delights of material existence that the deceased Canon had so highly praised.

Incalculable advantages! For, to hear the late departed Canon Chapeloud, not one of the priests who dwelt in the town of Tours, not even the Archbishop himself, could be the object of care so delicate or so precise as that lavished by Mademoiselle Gamard on her two boarders. The first words spoken by the Canon to his friend as they walked in the Mall had almost always referred to the excellent dinner he had just eaten; and it was a rare thing if, in the course of the seven walks they took in the week, he did not happen to say at least fourteen times, "That good woman has certainly a vocation for taking charge of the priesthood."

"Only think," said the Canon to Birotteau, "for twelve successive years clean linen, albs, surplices, bands—nothing has ever been missing. I always find everything in its place and in sufficient numbers, all smelling of orris-root. My furniture is constantly polished, and so well wiped that for a long time past I have not known what dust means. Did you ever see a speck in my rooms? Then the fire-logs are well chosen, the smallest things are all good; in short, it is as if Mademoiselle Gamard always had an eye on my room. I cannot recollect in ten years ever having had to ring twice for anything whatever. That I call living! never to have to look for a thing, not even for one's slippers; always to find a good fire and a good table. Once my bellows put me out, the nozzle had got burned; I had not to complain twice. The very next day Mademoiselle had bought me a nice pair of bellows and the pair of tongs you see me use to put the fire together."

Birotteau's only reply was, "Smelling of orris-root!" That smelling of orris-root always struck him. The Canon's

words painted a really ideal state of happiness to the poor priest whose bands and albs nearly turned his brain; for he had no sense of order, and not infrequently forgot to bespeak his dinner. And so, whenever he caught sight of Mademoiselle Gamard at Saint-Gatien, either while going round for the offertory or while reading mass, he never failed to give her a gentle and kindly glance such as Saint Theresa may have raised to heaven.

Though the comfort which every creature desires, and of which he had so often dreamed, had now fallen to his lot, as it is difficult for any man, even for a priest, to live without a hobby, for the last eighteen months the Abbé Birotteau had substituted for his two gratified passions a craving for a canonry. The title of canon had become to him what that of a peer must be to a plebeian minister. And the probability of a nomination, the hopes he had just been encouraged in at Madame de Listomère's, had so effectually turned his brain that it was only on reaching home that he discovered that he had left his umbrella at her house. Perhaps, indeed, but for the rain that fell in torrents, he would not have remembered it then, so completely was he absorbed in repeating to himself all that had been said on the subject of his preferment by the members of the party at Madame de Listomère's—an old lady with whom he spent every Wednesday evening.

The Abbé rang sharply as a hint to the maid not to keep him waiting. Then he shrank into the corner by the door so as to be splashed as little as possible; but the water from the roof ran off precisely on the toes of his shoes, and the gusts of wind blew on to him squalls of rain not unlike a repeated shower bath. After calculating the time necessary for coming from the kitchen to pull the latch-string under the door, he rang again, a very significant peal. "They cannot have gone out," thought he, hearing not a sound within. And for the third time he rang, again and again, a peal that sounded so sharply through the house, and was so

loudly repeated by every echo in the Cathedral, that it was impossible not to be roused by this assertive jangle. And a few moments after it was not without satisfaction, mingled with annoyance, that he heard the maid's wooden shoes clattering over the pebbly stone floor. Still, the gouty priest's troubles were not over so soon as he thought. Instead of pulling the latch, Marianne was obliged to unlock the door with the huge key, and draw back the bolts.

"How can you leave me to ring three times in such weather?" said he to Marianne.

"Why, sir, as you see, the house was locked up. Everybody has been in bed a long time; it has struck a quarter to ten. Mademoiselle must have thought you had not gone out."

"But you yourself saw me go out. Besides, Mademoiselle knows very well that I go to Madame de Listomère's every Wednesday."

"Well, sir, I only did as Mademoiselle told me," replied Marianne, locking the door again.

These words were a blow to the Abbé, which he felt all the more keenly for the intense bliss of his day-dream. He said nothing, but followed Marianne to the kitchen, to fetch his bedroom candle, which he supposed would have been brought down there. But instead of going to the kitchen, Marianne lighted the Abbé up to his rooms, where he found the candlestick on a table outside the door of the red drawing-room, in a sort of anteroom, formed of the stair-landing, which the Canon had shut in for the purpose by a large glass partition. Dumb with surprise, he hurried into his bedroom, found no fire on the hearth, and called Marianne, who had not yet had time to go downstairs.

"You have not lighted my fire?" said he.

"I beg your pardon, sir; it must have gone out again."

Birotteau looked again at the hearth, and saw plainly that the ashes had been piled there since the morning.

"I want to dry my feet," he went on; "make up the fire."

Marianne obeyed with the haste of a woman who wants

to go to sleep. While the Abbé himself hunted for his slippers, failing to see them in the middle of his bed-rug, as usual, he made certain observations as to the way Marianne was dressed, which proved to a demonstration that she had not just got out of bed, as she had asserted. And he then remembered that for about a fortnight past he had been weaned from all the little attentions that had made life so endurable for the last eighteen months. Now, as it is in the nature of narrow minds to argue from minute things, he at once gave himself up to deep reflections on these four incidents, imperceptible to anybody else, but to him nothing less than four catastrophes. The oversight as to his slippers, Marianne's falsehood with regard to the fire, the unaccustomed removal of his candlestick to the table in the anteroom, and the long waiting so ingeniously inflicted on him, on the threshold in the rain, were ominous of a complete wreck of his happiness.

When the fire was blazing on the dogs, when his night-lamp was lighted, and Marianne had left him without inquiring as usual, "Does Monsieur need anything further?" the Abbé sank gently into his departed friend's roomy and handsome easy-chair; still, his action as he dropped into it was somewhat melancholy. The worthy man was oppressed by the presentiment of terrible disaster. His eyes fell in succession on the handsome timepiece, the chest of drawers, the chairs, curtains, and rugs, the four-post bed, the holy-water shell and the crucifix, on a Virgin by le Valentin, on a Christ by Lebrun—in short, on all the details of the room; the expression of his face betrayed the pangs of the tenderest farewell that a lover ever looked at his first mistress, or an old man at his latest plantation. The Abbé had just detected—a little late, it is true—the symptoms of a covert persecution to which he had for about three months been subjected by Mademoiselle Gamard, whose ill-will would no doubt have been suspected sooner by a man of keener intelligence.

Have not all old maids a certain talent for emphasizing the acts and words suggested to them by hatred? They

scratch as cats do. And not only do they hurt, but they take pleasure in hurting, and in making their victim see that they can hurt. While a man of the world would not have allowed himself to be clawed a second time, the worthy Birotteau had taken several scratches in the face before he had conceived of malignant purpose.

Immediately, with the inquisitorial shrewdness acquired by priests, accustomed as they are to direct consciences and to investigate trifles from the shades of the confessional, the Abbé Birotteau set to work to formulate the following proposition—as though it were the basis of a religious controversy.—Granting that Mademoiselle Gamard may have forgotten Madame de Listomère's evening—that Marianne had neglected to light my fire—that they thought I was at home; as it is certain that I, *myself*, must have taken my candlestick downstairs this morning!!!—it is impossible that Mademoiselle Gamard, seeing it in her sitting-room, could have supposed I had gone to bed. *Ergo*, Mademoiselle Gamard left me at the door in the rain on purpose; and by having the candlestick carried up to my rooms she meant me to know it.—"What does it mean?" he said aloud, carried away by the gravity of the case, as he rose to take off his wet clothes, and put on his dressing-gown and his nightcap. Then he went from the bed to the fire gesticulating and jerking out such comments as these, in various tones of voice, all ended in a falsetto pitch as though to represent points of interrogation.

"What the deuce have I done? Why does she owe me a grudge?—Marianne cannot have forgotten my fire; Mademoiselle must have told her not to light it! I should be childish not to see from the tone and manner she assumes toward me that I have been so unfortunate as to displease her.—Nothing of the kind ever happened to Chapeloud!—It will be impossible for me to live in the midst of the annoyances that . . . At my age too!"

He went to bed, hoping to clear up on the morrow the cause of the hatred which was destroying forever the happi-

ness he had enjoyed for two years after wishing for it so long. Alas! the secret motives of Mademoiselle Gamard's feeling against him were destined to remain forever unknown to him; not because they were difficult to guess, but because the poor man had not the simple candor which enables great minds and thorough scoundrels to recognize and judge themselves. Only a man of genius or a master of intrigue ever says to himself, "I was to blame." Interest and talent are the only conscientious and lucid counsellors.

Now, the Abbé Birotteau, whose kindliness went to the pitch of silliness, whose knowledge was a sort of veneer laid on by patient work, who had no experience whatever of the world and its ways, and who lived between the altar and the confessional, chiefly engaged in deciding trivial cases of conscience in his capacity of confessor to the schools of the town and to some noble souls who appreciated him—the Abbé Birotteau was, in short, to be regarded as a big baby to whom the greater part of social customs were absolutely unknown. At the same time, the selfishness natural to all human beings, reinforced by the egoism peculiar to a priest, and by that of the narrow life of a provincial town, had insensibly grown strong in him without his suspecting it. If any one had taken enough interest in searching the good man's soul to show him that, in the infinitely small details of his existence and the trivial duties of his private life, he failed essentially in the self-sacrifice he professed, he would have punished and mortified himself in all sincerity.

But those whom we offend, even unwittingly, reck not of our innocence; they desire and achieve revenge. Thus Birotteau, weak as he was, was doomed to suffer under the hand of that great distributive Justice which always trusts the world to carry out its sentences, known to many simpletons as the misfortunes of life.

There was this difference between Canon Chapeloud and the Abbé: one was a witty and ingenious egoist, the other an honest and clumsy one. When Monsieur Chapeloud had come to board with Mademoiselle Gamard, he could per-

fectly well gauge his landlady's character. The confessional had enlightened him as to the bitterness infused into an old maid's heart by the misfortune of finding herself outside society; his behavior to Mademoiselle Gamard was shrewdly calculated. The lady, being no more than eight-and-thirty, still had those little pretensions which, in such discreet persons, turn in later years into a high opinion of themselves.

The Canon understood that, to live comfortably with Mademoiselle Gamard, he must always show her the same respect and attention, and be more infallible than the Pope. To attain this end he established no points of contact between himself and her beyond what the strictest politeness required, and those necessarily subsisting between two persons living under the same roof. Thus, though he and the Abbé Troubert regularly took their three meals a day, he had never appeared at breakfast, but had accustomed Mademoiselle Gamard to send up to him, in his bed, a cup of coffee with milk. Then, he had avoided the boredom of supper by always taking tea at some house where he spent the evening. Thus he rarely saw his landlady at any time of the day excepting at dinner, but he always came into the room a few minutes before the hour. During this polite little visit, every day of the twelve years he had spent under her roof he had asked her the same questions and received the same answers. How Mademoiselle Gamard had slept during the night, the breakfast, little domestic events, the appearance of her face, the health of her person, the weather, the length of the Church services, the incidents of the morning's Mass, the health of this or that priest, constituted the themes of this daily dialogue.

During dinner he always indulged her with indirect flattery, going on from the quality of the fish, the excellence of some seasoning, or the merits of a sauce, to those of Mademoiselle Gamard and her virtues as a housekeeper. He was sure of soothing all the old maid's conceits when he praised the art with which her preserves were made, her gherkins pickled, and the excellence of her jam, her pies, and other gastronomical inventions. Finally, the wily

Canon never quitted her yellow drawing-room without remarking that there was not another house in Tours where the coffee was so good as that he had just been drinking.

Thanks to this perfect comprehension of Mademoiselle Gamard's character, and this science of life as practiced by the Canon for those twelve years, no grounds had ever occurred for a discussion on any matter of domestic discipline. The Abbé Chapeloud had from the first discerned every angle, every rasping edge, every asperity in this old maid, and had so regulated the effect of the tangents where they inevitably met, as to secure from her every concession needed for peace and happiness in life. And Mademoiselle Gamard would always say that Canon Chapeloud was a most amiable man, very easy to live with, and full of wit.

As to the Abbé Troubert, the bigot never by any chance spoke of him. Troubert had so completely fallen into the routine of her life, like a satellite in the orbit of its planet, that he had become to her a sort of mongrel creature between those of the human and those of the canine species; he filled a place in her mind exactly below that occupied by her friends and that filled by a fat asthmatic pug-dog to which she was tenderly devoted; she managed him completely, and their interests became so inextricably knit that many persons of Mademoiselle Gamard's circle supposed that the Abbé Troubert had an eye to the old maid's fortune, and was attaching her to him by his constant patience, guiding her all the more effectually because he affected to obey her, never allowing her to see in him the faintest wish to rule her.

When the Canon died, the old maid, anxious to have a boarder of quiet habits, naturally thought of this priest. The Canon's will had not yet been opened when Mademoiselle Gamard was already meditating giving the departed Canon's upper rooms to her worthy Abbé Troubert, whom she thought but poorly lodged on the ground floor. But when the Abbé Birotteau came to discuss with her the written conditions of her terms, she found that he was so much in love with the lodgings for which he had long cherished a

passion he might now avow, that she did not venture to propose an exchange, and affection gave way before the pressure of interest. To console her favorite Abbé, Mademoiselle substituted a parquet flooring in a neat pattern for the white Chateau-Renaud tiles in the ground-floor rooms, and rebuilt a chimney that smoked.

The Abbé Birotteau had seen his friend Chapeloud constantly for twelve years, without its ever having occurred to him to wonder why he was so excessively circumspect in his intercourse with the old maid. When he came to live under this saintly damsel's roof he felt like a lover on the verge of happiness. Even if he had not been blinded by natural stupidity, his eyes were too much dazzled by contentment for him to be capable of gauging Mademoiselle Gamard or of considering the due measure of his daily relations with her. Mademoiselle Gamard, seen from afar, through the prism of the material enjoyment the Abbé dreamed of finding with her, appeared to him an admirable creature, a perfect Christian, an essentially charitable soul, the woman of the Gospel, the wise Virgin graced with the humble and modest virtues which shed celestial fragrance over life. And thus, with all the enthusiasm of a man who has reached a long-wished-for goal, with the simplicity of a child and the silly heedlessness of an old man devoid of worldly experience, he came into Mademoiselle Gamard's life as a fly is caught in a spider's web.

So the first day he was to dine and sleep in the old maid's house he lingered in her drawing-room, as much in the wish to make acquaintance with her as in the inexplicable embarrassment that often troubles shy people and makes them fear lest they should be rude if they break off a conversation to leave the room. So there he remained all the evening. Another old maid, a friend of Birotteau's, Mademoiselle Salomon de Villenoix, came in the evening. Then Mademoiselle Gamard had the joy of arranging a game of boston. The Abbé, as he went to bed, thought he had had a very pleasant evening.

As yet he knew Mademoiselle Gamard and the Abbé Troubert but very little, and saw only the surface. Few persons show their faults unveiled at first. Generally everybody tries to assume an attractive exterior. So Birotteau conceived the delightful purpose of devoting his evenings to Mademoiselle Gamard instead of spending them elsewhere. The lady had some few years since conceived a desire which revived more strongly every day. This desire, common to old men, and even to pretty women, had become in her a passion like that of Birotteau for his friend Chapeloud's rooms, and was rooted in the old maid's heart by the feelings of pride, egoism, envy, and vanity which are innate in the worldly-minded. This story repeats itself in every age. You have but slightly to enlarge the circle at the bottom of which these personages are about to move, to find the coefficient motive of events which happen in the highest ranks of society.

Mademoiselle Gamard spent her evenings at six or eight different houses by turns. Whether it was that she was annoyed at having to seek company, and thought that at her age she had a right to expect some return; whether her conceit was affronted by her having no circle of her own; or whether it was that her vanity craved the compliments and amusements she saw her friends enjoying—all her ambition was to make her *salon* a centre of union toward which a certain number of persons would tend every evening with pleasure. When Birotteau and his friend Mademoiselle Salomon had spent a few evenings in her room with the faithful and patient Abbé Troubert, one night, as she came out of Saint-Gatien, Mademoiselle Gamard said to the kind friends of whom she had hitherto considered herself the slave, that those who cared to see her might very well come once a week to her house, where a sufficient party met already to make up a game of boston; that she could not leave her new boarder, the Abbé Birotteau, alone; that Mademoiselle Salomon had not yet missed a single evening of the week; that she belonged to her boarders; and that, etc., etc.

Her speech was all the more humbly haughty and volubly sweet because Mademoiselle Salomon de Villenoix belonged to the most aristocratic circle in Tours. Though Mademoiselle Salomon came solely for the Abbé's sake, Mademoiselle Gamard triumphed in having her in her drawing-room. Thanks to the Abbé Birotteau, she found herself on the eve of succeeding in her great scheme of forming a circle which might become as numerous and as agreeable as were those of Madame de Listomère, of Mademoiselle Merlin de la Blottière, and other devout persons in a position to receive the pious society of Tours. But, alas! the Abbé Birotteau brought Mademoiselle Gamard's hopes to an overthrow.

Now, if any persons, who have attained in life the enjoyment of a long-wished-for happiness, have entered into the gladness the Abbé must have felt in lying down to rest in Chapeloud's bed, they must also form a slight notion of Mademoiselle Gamard's chagrin at the ruin of her cherished scheme. After accepting his good fortune patiently enough for six months, Birotteau deserted his home, carrying with him Mademoiselle Salomon.

In spite of unheard-of efforts, the ambitious Gamard had secured no more than five or six recruits, whose fidelity was very problematical, and at least four unfailing visitors were needed for regular boston. She was consequently obliged to make honorable amends and return to her old friends, for old maids are too poor company to themselves not to crave the doubtful pleasures of society.

The causes of this defection are easily imagined. Though the Abbé was one of those to whom Paradise shall one day be opened in virtue of the words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," he, like many fools, could not endure the weariness inflicted on him by other fools. Unintelligent persons are like weeds that thrive in good ground; they love to be amused in proportion to the degree in which they weary themselves. Being the incarnation of the dulness they suffer from, the craving they perpetually feel to be divorced from themselves produces the mania for excitement, the need to

be where they are not, which characterizes them as it does other creatures who lack feeling, or whose lot is a failure, or who suffer by their own fault. Without understanding too clearly the vacuity and nullity of Mademoiselle Gamard, or discerning the smallness of her mind, poor Birotteau discovered, too late for happiness, the faults she had in common with all old maids, as well as those personal to herself.

What is evil, in other people, contrasts so strongly with what is good that it generally strikes the eye before inflicting a wound. This moral phenomenon might at need justify the tendency that leads us all more or less to evil speaking. Socially speaking, it is so natural to satirize the faults of others that we ought to forgive the severe gossip to which our own absurdities give rise, and wonder at nothing but calumny.

But the good Abbé's eyes were never at the precise focus which enables the worldly-wise to see and at once evade their neighbors' sharp tongues; to discover his landlady's faults, he was obliged to endure the warning given by nature to all its creatures, that of suffering.

Old maids, having never bent their temper or their lives to other lives and other tempers, as woman's destiny requires, have for the most part a mania for making everything about them bend to them. In Mademoiselle Gamard this feeling had degenerated into despotism, but this despotism could only be exerted in small things. For instance—out of a thousand cases—the basket of counters and fish placed on the boston table for the Abbé Birotteau must be left on the spot where she had put it, and the Abbé irritated her extremely by moving it, as he did almost every evening. What was the cause of this touchiness foolishly provoked by mere trifles, and what was its object? No one could say; Mademoiselle Gamard herself did not know.

Though very lamblike by nature, the new boarder did not like to feel the crook too often, any more than a sheep, especially a crook set with nails. Without understanding Canon Troubert's amazing patience, Birotteau was anxious to escape

the bliss which Mademoiselle Gamard was bent on seasoning to her own taste, for she thought she could compound happiness as she could preserves; but the luckless priest set to work very clumsily, as a result of his perfectly artless nature. So the separation was not effected without some clawing and pricking, to which the Abbé Birotteau tried to seem insensible.

By the end of the first year of his life under Mademoiselle Gamard's roof the Abbé had fallen into his old habits, spending two evenings a week at Madame de Listomère's, three with Mademoiselle Salomon, and the other two with Mademoiselle Merlin de la Blottière. These ladies moved in the aristocratic sphere of Tours society, to which Mademoiselle Gamard was not admitted. So the landlady was excessively indignant at the Abbé's defection, which made her aware of her small importance: any kind of selection implying some contempt for the rejected object.

"Monsieur Birotteau did not find us good enough company," the Abbé Troubert would say to Mademoiselle Gamard's friends when she was obliged to give up her "evenings." "He is a wit, a *gourmet!* He must have fashion, luxury, brilliant conversation, the tittle-tattle of the town."

And such words always prompted Mademoiselle Gamard to praise the Canon's excellent temper at the expense of Birotteau's.

"He is not so clever when all is said," she remarked. "But for Canon Chapeloud he would never have been received by Madame de Listomère. Oh, I lost a great deal when the Abbé Chapeloud died. What an amiable man! and so easy to live with! Indeed, in twelve years we never had the smallest difficulty or disagreement."

Mademoiselle Gamard painted so unflattering a portrait of Monsieur Birotteau that her innocent boarder was regarded by this citizen circle, secretly hostile to the aristocratic class, as an essentially fractious man, very difficult to get on with.

Then for a few weeks the old maid had the satisfaction of hearing herself pitied by her female friends, who, without believing a word of what they said, repeated again and again, "How can you, who are so gentle and so kind, have inspired him with such dislike—?" or, "Be comforted, dear Mademoiselle Gamard, every one knows you too well—" and so forth.

Delighted, nevertheless, to escape spending an evening each week in the Close—the most deserted and gloomy spot in all Tours, and the most remote from the centre of life—they all blessed the Abbé.

Love or hatred must constantly increase between two persons who are always together; every moment fresh reasons are found for loving or hating better. Thus to Mademoiselle Gamard the Abbé Birotteau became unendurable. Eighteen months after taking him as a boarder just when the good man believed he had found the peace of contentment in the silence of aversion, and prided himself on having come so comfortably to terms with the old woman, to use his expression, he was to her the object of covert persecution and calmly planned animosity.

The four capital facts of the closed door, the forgotten slippers, the lack of fire, the candlestick taken to his rooms, alone could betray the terrible enmity of which the last effects were not to fall on him till the moment when they would be irremediable. As he went to sleep, the good Abbé racked his brain, but vainly—and, indeed, he must soon have come to the bottom of it—to account for Mademoiselle Gamard's singularly uncivil behavior. In point of fact, as he had originally acted very logically, obeying the natural law of his egoism, he could not possibly form a guess as to how he had offended his landlady. While great things are simple to understand, and easy to express, the mean things of life need much detail. The incidents which constitute the prologue, as it were, to this parochial drama, in which the passions will be seen not less violent than if they had been excited by important interests, necessitated this long intro-

duction, and any exact historian would have found it difficult to abridge the trivial tale.

When he awoke next morning, the Abbé's thoughts were so much set on the canonry that he forgot the four circumstances which, the evening before, had appeared to him to be sinister prognostics of a future full of disaster. Birotteau was not the man to get up without a fire; he rang to announce to Marianne that he was awake, and wanted her; then, as he was wont, he lay lost in a somnolent, half-dreamy state, during which, as a rule, the woman made the fire, and dragged him gently from his last doze by a hum of inquiry and quiet bustle—a sort of music that he liked.

Half an hour went by, and Marianne had not appeared. The Abbé, already half a Canon, was about to ring again, when he stayed his hand on hearing a man's step on the stairs. In fact, the Abbé Troubert, after discreetly tapping at the door, at Birotteau's bidding came in. This call did not surprise him; the priests were in the habit of paying each other a visit once a month. The Canon was at once amazed that Marianne should not yet have lighted his quasi-colleague's fire. He opened a window, called Marianne in a rough tone, and bade her come up at once; then, turning to his brother priest, he said, "If Mademoiselle should hear that you have no fire, she would give Marianne a good scolding."

After this speech he inquired for Birotteau's health, and asked him, in an insinuating voice, whether he had any recent news that could encourage his hope of being made a Canon. The Abbé explained to him what was being done, and guilelessly told him who the personages were that Madame de Listomère was canvassing, not knowing that Troubert had never forgiven that lady for not inviting him to her house—him—Canon Troubert, twice designate to be made Vicar-General of the diocese.

It would be impossible to meet with two figures offering so many points of contrast as those of these two priests. Troubert, tall and lean, had a bilious yellow hue, while

Birotteau was what is familiarly called crummy. His face, round and florid, spoke of good-nature devoid of ideas; while Troubert's, long and furrowed by deep wrinkles, wore at times an expression of irony and scorn; still, attentive examination was needed to discover these feelings. The Canon was habitually and absolutely placid, his eyelids almost always lowered over a pair of orange-hazel eyes, whose glance was at will very clear and piercing. Red hair completed this countenance, which was constantly clouded under the shroud cast over his features by serious meditations. Several persons had at first supposed him to be absorbed in high and rooted ambition; but those who thought they knew him best had ended by demolishing this opinion, representing him as stultified by Mademoiselle Gamard's tyranny, or worn by long fasting. He rarely spoke, and never laughed. When he happened to be pleasurably moved, a faint smile appeared and lost itself in the furrows on his cheeks.

Birotteau, on the other hand, was all expansiveness, all openness; he liked titbits, and could be amused by a trifle with the artlessness of a man free from gall and malice. The Abbé Troubert at first sight inspired an involuntary feeling of dread, while the Vicar made every one who looked at him smile kindly. When the tall Canon stalked solemnly along the cloisters and aisles of Saint-Gatien, his brow bent, his eye stern, he commanded respect; his bowed figure harmonized with the yellow vaulting of the Cathedral; there was something monumental in the folds of his gown, and worthy of the sculptor's art. But the good little Abbé moved without dignity, trotted and pattered, looking as if he rolled along.

And yet the two men had one point of resemblance. While Troubert's ambitious looks, by making the world afraid of him, had perhaps contributed to condemn him to the modest dignity of a mere Canon, Birotteau's character and appearance seemed to stamp him forever as no more than a *vicaire* of the Cathedral. The Abbé Troubert mean-

while, at the age of fifty, by the moderation of his conduct, by the apparently total absence of any ambition in his aims, and by his saintly life, had dispelled the fears his superiors had conceived of his supposed cleverness and his alarming exterior. Indeed, for a year past, his health had been seriously impaired, so that his early promotion to the dignity of Vicar-General to the Archbishop seemed probable. His rivals even hoped for his appointment, to enable them the more effectually to prepare for their own, during the short span of life that might yet be granted him by a malady that had become chronic. Birotteau's triple chin, far from suggesting the same hopes, displayed to the candidates who were struggling for the canonry all the symptoms of vigorous health, and his gout seemed to them the proverbial assurance of a long life.

The Abbé Chapeloud, a man of great good sense, whose amiability had secured him the friendship of persons in good society and of the various heads of the diocese, had always opposed the elevation of the Abbé Troubert, secretly and with much address; he had even hindered his admission to any of the *salons* where the best set in Tours were wont to meet, though during his lifetime Troubert always treated him with great respect, and on all occasions showed him the utmost deference. This persistent submissiveness had not availed to change the deceased Canon's opinion; during his last walk with Birotteau, he had said to him once more—

"Do not trust that dry pole Troubert! He is Sixtus V. reduced to the scale of a bishopric."

This was Mademoiselle Gamard's friend and messmate, who, the very day after that on which she had, so to speak, declared war with poor Birotteau, had come to call on him with every mark of friendliness.

"You must excuse Marianne," said Troubert as she came in. "I fancy she did my room first. My place is very damp, and I coughed a great deal during the night.—You are very healthily situated here," he added, looking up at the moldings.

"Oh, I am lodged like a Canon!" replied Birotteau with a smile.

"And I like a curate," replied the humble priest.

"Yes, but before long you will be lodged in the Archbishop's Palace," said the good Abbé, who only wanted that everybody should be happy.

"Oh! or in the graveyard. God's will be done!" and Troubert looked up to heaven with a resigned air. "I came," he went on, "to beg you to lend me the 'General Clergy List.' No one but you has the book at Tours."

"Take it out of the bookcase," replied Birotteau, reminded by the Canon's last words of all the joys of his life.

The tall priest went into the library, and remained there all the time the Abbé was dressing. Presently the breakfast bell rang, and Birotteau, reflecting that but for Troubert's visit he would have had no fire to get up by, said to himself, "He is a good man!"

The two priests went down together, each armed with an enormous folio, which they laid on one of the consoles in the dining-room.

"What in the world is that?" asked Mademoiselle Gamard in sharp tones, addressing Birotteau. "You are not going to lumber up my dining-room with old books, I hope!"

"They are some books I wanted," said the Abbé Troubert. "Monsieur is kind enough to lend them to me."

"I might have guessed that," said she with a scornful smile. "Monsieur Birotteau does not often study such big books."

"And how are you, Mademoiselle?" asked the Abbé in a piping voice.

"Why, not at all well," she replied curtly. "You were the cause of my being roused from my first sleep, and I felt the effects all night." And as she seated herself, Mademoiselle Gamard added, "Gentlemen, the milk will get cold."

Astounded at being so sourly received by his hostess when he expected her to apologize, but frightened, as timid

people are, by the prospect of a discussion, especially when they themselves are the subject of it, the poor Abbé took his place in silence. Then, recognizing in Mademoiselle Gamard's face the obvious symptoms of a bad temper, he sat warring with his common-sense, which advised him not to submit to her want of manners, while his nature prompted him to avoid a quarrel. Birotteau, a prey to this internal struggle, began by seriously studying the broad green stripes painted on the oilcloth cover, which, from immemorial habit, Mademoiselle Gamard always left on the table during breakfast, heedless of the frayed edges and scars innumerable that covered this cloth. The two boarders were seated opposite each other, in cane armchairs at each end of the table, a royal square; the place between them being occupied by the landlady, who towered above the table from a chair mounted on runners, padded with cushions, and backing on the dining-room stove. This room and the common sitting-room were on the ground floor, under the Abbé Birotteau's bedroom and drawing-room. When the Abbé had received from Mademoiselle Gamard his cup of sweetened coffee, he felt chilled by the utter silence in which he was doomed to perform the usually cheerful function of breakfast. He dared not look either at Troubert's expressionless face, nor at the old maid's threatening countenance; so, to do something, he turned to the pug-dog, overburdened with fat, lying near the stove on a cushion whence it never stirred, finding always on the left a little plate of dainties, and on the right a saucer of clean water.

"Well, my pet," said he, "so you want your coffee!"

This personage, one of the most important members of the household, but not a troublesome one, since he never barked now, and left the conversation to his mistress, looked up at Birotteau with little eyes buried in the folds of fat that wrinkled his face. Then he cunningly shut them again.

To give the measure of the priest's discomfiture, it must be explained that, being gifted with a voice and volubility as resonant and meaningless as the sound of an India-rubber

ball, he asserted, without being able to give the faculty any reason for his opinion, that speech favored digestion. Mademoiselle Gamard, who shared this theory of hygiene, had never hitherto failed to converse during meals, notwithstanding their misunderstanding; but now for some few days the Abbé had racked his wits in vain to ask her insidious questions which might loosen her tongue. If the narrow limits to which this story is restricted would allow of a report in full of one of these conversations which always provoked the Abbé Troubert's bitter and sardonic smiles, it would give a perfect picture of the Bœotian existence of provincials. Some clever men might perhaps be even pleased to know the extraordinary amplitude given by the Abbé Birotteau and Mademoiselle Gamard to their personal opinions on politics, religion, and literature. There would certainly be some very funny things to tell: such as their reasons, in 1820, for doubting the death of Napoleon, or the conjectures which led them to believe in the survival of Louis XVII., smuggled away in a hollow log of wood. Who would not have laughed to hear them asserting, with arguments peculiarly their own, that the King of France alone spent the money collected in taxes; that the Chambers met to destroy the Clergy; that more than thirteen hundred thousand persons had perished on the scaffold during the Revolution? Then they discussed the press, knowing nothing of how many newspapers were issued, having not the smallest idea of what this modern power is. Finally, Monsieur Birotteau listened respectfully to Mademoiselle Gamard when she asserted that a man fed on an egg every morning would infallibly die at the end of a year, and that it had been known; that a soft roll eaten without drinking for a few days would cure sciatica; that all the workmen who had been employed in the destruction of the Abbey of Saint-Martin had died within six months; that a certain préfet had done his utmost in Bonaparte's time to ruin the towers of Saint-Gatien, and a thousand other absurd stories.

But at the present juncture Birotteau felt his tongue dead

within him; so he resigned himself to eating without trying to converse. He soon thought that such silence was perilous to his digestion, and boldly said, "This is excellent coffee!" But the courageous act fell flat.

After looking at the narrow strip of sky above the garden, between the two black buttresses of Saint-Gatien, the Abbé again was brave enough to remark, "It will be finer to-day than it was yesterday."

At this Mademoiselle Gamard did no more than cast one of her most ingratiating glances at Monsieur Troubert, and then turn her eyes full of terrible severity on Birotteau, who was happily looking down.

No being of the female sex was better able to assume the elegiac attitude of an old maid than Mademoiselle Sophie Gamard; but to do justice in describing a person whose character will give the greatest interest to the trivial events of this drama, and to the antecedent lives of the figures playing a part in it, it will be well here to epitomize the ideas of which the old maid is the outcome. The habits of life form the soul, and the soul forms the countenance. If in society, as in the universe, everything must have a purpose, there yet are on this earth some existences of which the use and purpose are undiscoverable; morality and political economy alike reject the individual that consumes without producing, that fills a place on earth without diffusing either good or evil—for evil, no doubt, is a form of good of which the results are not immediately manifest. Very rarely does an old maid fail to place herself by her own act in this class of unproductive creatures. Now, if the consciousness of work done gives productive beings a sense of satisfaction which helps them to endure life, the knowledge that they are a burden on others, or even merely useless, must produce the contrary effect, and give to the inert a contempt for themselves as great as that they provoke in others. This stern social reprobation is one of the causes which, unknown to themselves, contribute to implant in their souls the grievance which is stamped on their faces.

A prejudice, not perhaps without a basis of truth, everywhere gives rise—and in France more than elsewhere—to marked disfavor being felt toward a woman with whom no man has chosen to share his fortunes, or to endure the woes of life. And an age comes to unmarried women when the world, rightly or wrongly, condemns them on the strength of the disdain to which they are victims. If ugly, the amiability of their nature ought to have redeemed the imperfections of their persons; if pretty, their loneliness must have its cause in serious reasons. It is hard to decide which of the two classes is most to be contemned. If their single life is deliberately chosen, if it is a determination to be independent, neither men nor mothers can forgive them for having shirked the sacrifice of woman by refusing to know the passions that make her sex pathetic. To reject its sufferings is to forego its poetry, to cease to deserve the sweet consolations to which a mother has always uncontested rights. Then the generous feelings, the exquisite qualities of woman, can only be developed by constant exercise. When she remains unmarried, a creature of the female sex is a self-contradiction: egoistical and cold, she fills us with horror.

This pitiless verdict is unfortunately too just for old maids to misinterpret its motives. These ideas germinate in their hearts as naturally as the effects of their desolate lives are imprinted on their features. Thus they wither, because the constant expansion, or the happiness that blooms in a woman's face and lends softness to her movements, has never existed in them. Then they grow harsh and discontented, because a creature that fails of its purpose is unhappy, it suffers, and suffering brings forth viciousness. In fact, before an unmarried woman spites herself for her loneliness, she accuses the whole world, and from accusation there is but one step to the desire for revenge.

Again, the ill grace that disfigures their persons is an inevitable outcome of their life. Never having felt the necessity to please, elegance and good taste are unknown to them. This feeling gradually leads them to choose every-

thing to suit their own convenience at the cost of what might be agreeable to others. Without quite understanding their dissimilarity to other women, at last they observe it and suffer from it. Jealousy is an indelible passion in the female heart. Old maids are jealous for nothing, and know only the woes of the single passion which men can forgive in women because it flatters them. Thus tormented on every side, and compelled to reject the development of their nature, old maids are always conscious of a moral uneasiness to which they never become accustomed. Is it not hard at any age, especially for a woman, to read a feeling of repugnance on every face, when it ought to have been her fate to inspire none but sensations of kindliness in the hearts of those about her? Hence an old maid's glance is always askance, not so much from modesty as from fear and shame.

Now, it is impossible that a person perpetually at war with herself, or at loggerheads with life, should leave others in peace and never envy their happiness. This world of gloomy ideas lay complete in Mademoiselle Gamard's dull gray eyes; and the broad, dark circle in which they were set spoke of the long struggles of her solitary life. All the wrinkles on her face were straight lines. The form of her brow, head, and cheeks was characterized by rigidity and hardness. Without heeding them, she left the hairs, once brown, of two or three moles on her chin to grow as they would. Her thin lips scarcely covered her long but sufficiently white teeth. She was dark, and her hair had once been black, but terrible headaches had turned it white. This disaster led her to wear a front; but not knowing how to put it on so as to conceal the junction, there often was a small gap between her cap-border and the black ribbon that fastened this half wig, very carelessly curled. Her gown, of thin silk in summer, of merinos in winter, and always of Carmelite brown, fitted her ungraceful figure and thin arms rather too closely. Her collar, always limp, betrayed a throat whose reddish skin was as finely lined as an oak leaf looked at in the light.

Her parentage accounted for the faults of her figure. She was the daughter of a dealer in fire-logs, a peasant who had risen in the world. At eighteen she might have been fresh and plump, but not a trace was now left either of the white skin or the fine color she boasted of having then had. The hues of her complexion had acquired the dull pallor common enough in very devout persons. An aquiline nose was of all her features that which most strongly expressed the despotism of her ideas, just as the flatness of her forehead revealed her narrowness of mind. Her movements had an odd abruptness bereft of all grace; and only to see her pull her handkerchief out of her bag and loudly blow her nose would have told you what her character and habits were. Fairly tall, she held herself very upright, justifying the remark of a naturalist, who explains the stiffness of old maids physiologically by declaring that all their joints anchylose. She walked so that the motion did not distribute itself equally over her whole person, or produce the graceful undulations that are so attractive in a woman; she moved all of a piece, so to speak, seeming to lift herself at every step, like the statue of the Commendatore. In her moments of good-humor she would give it out, as all old maids do, that she could have been married, but that, happily, she had found out her lover's faithlessness in time, and she thus, without knowing it, passed judgment on her heart in favor of her sense of self-interest.

This typical figure of an old maid was suitably set against a background of the grotesque pattern, representing Turkish landscapes, of a satin wall-paper with which the dining-room was hung. Mademoiselle Gamard habitually occupied this room, ornamented by two consoles and a barometer. In the place occupied by each priest was a little footstool in worsted work of faded hues.

The public sitting room, where she received company, was worthy of her. The room will be at once familiar when it is known that it went by the name of the yellow drawing-room; the hangings were yellow, the furniture and wall-

paper yellow; on the chimney-shelf, in front of a mirror with a gilt frame, candlesticks and a clock in cut glass reflected a hard glitter to the eye. As to Mademoiselle Gamard's private sanctum, no one had ever been allowed to enter it. It could only be conjectured that it was full of the odds and ends, the shabby furniture, the rags and tatters, so to speak, which all old maids collect and cling to so fondly.

This was the woman who was destined to exert the greatest influence over the Abbé Birotteau's latter days. Having failed to exercise the energies bestowed on woman in the way intended by nature, and urged by the need of expending them, this old maid had thrown them into the sordid intrigue, the petty tittle-tattle of provincial life, and the selfish scheming which at last exclusively absorbs all old maids.

Birotteau, for his woe, had developed in Sophie Gamard the only feelings this unhappy creature could possibly know, those of hatred; these, till now latent, as a result of the calm monotony of a country-town life, whose horizon was to her more especially narrow, were presently to become all the more intense for being wreaked on small things, and in a narrow sphere of activity. Birotteau was one of those men who are predestined to suffer everything, because, as they never foresee anything, they can avoid nothing; everything falls on them.

"Yes, it will be fine," the Canon replied after a pause, seeming to come out of his meditations and to wish to fulfil the laws of good manners.

Birotteau, frightened at the time that had elapsed between the remark and the reply, since he, for the first time in his life, had swallowed his coffee without speaking, left the dining-room, where his heart was held as in a vise. Feeling his cup of coffee lie heavy on his stomach, he went to walk, sadly enough, up and down the narrow box-edged paths which marked out a star in the garden. But as he turned after his first round, he saw the Abbé Troubert and Mademoiselle

Gamard standing at the glass door of the drawing-room; he with his arms crossed, as motionless as the statue on a tomb, she leaning against the shutter-door. Both, as they watched him, seemed to be counting the number of his steps.

To a timid person there is nothing so distressing as being the object of inquisitive inspection; when it is made by the eyes of hatred, the sort of suffering it inflicts becomes an intolerable martyrdom. Presently the Abbé fancied that he was hindering Mademoiselle Gamard and the Canon from taking their walk. This notion, inspired alike by fear and by good-nature, acquired such proportions that he abandoned the place. He went away, already thinking no more of his canonry, so greatly was he worried by the woman's maddening tyranny.

By chance, and happily for him, he was kept very busy at Saint-Gatien, where there were several funerals, a marriage, and two baptisms. This enabled him to forget his troubles. When his appetite warned him of the dinner hour, he took out his watch in some alarm, seeing that it was some minutes past four. He knew Mademoiselle Gamard's punctuality, so he hurried home.

He saw the first course brought down again as he passed the kitchen. Then on going into the dining-room, the old maid said to him in a tone of voice which betrayed alike the harshness of a reproof and the glee of finding her boarder in fault, "It is half-past four, Monsieur Birotteau; you knew we should not wait for you."

The priest looked at the dining-room clock, and the arrangement of the gauze wrapper, intended to protect it from dust, showed him that his landlady had wound it in the course of the morning, and had allowed herself the pleasure of setting it faster than the clock of Saint-Gatien's. There was nothing to be said. The least word of the suspicion he had conceived would have sprung the most terrible and plausible of those explosions of eloquence which Mademoiselle Gamard, like all women of her class, could give vent to in such cases.

The thousand-and-one vexations that a maid-servant can inflict on her master, or a wife on her husband, in the daily course of private life, were imagined by Mademoiselle Gamard, who heaped them on her boarder. The way in which she plotted her conspiracies against the poor Abbé's domestic comfort bore the stamp of deeply malignant genius. She contrived never to be in the wrong.

By the end of a week after the opening of this tale, his life in the house, and his position toward Mademoiselle Gamard, revealed to him a plot, hatching for six months past. So long as the old maid had been covert in her revenge, and the priest could voluntarily keep up his self-deceit, refusing to believe in her malevolent purpose, the moral effects had made no great progress in him. But since the incidents of the displacement of the candlestick and the clock put too fast, Birotteau could no longer doubt that he was living under the rule of an aversion that kept an ever-watchful eye on him. From this he rapidly sank into despair, forever seeing Mademoiselle Gamard's lean and talon-like fingers ready to claw his heart.

The old maid, happy in living on a sentiment so teeming with excitement as revenge is, delighted in hovering and wheeling above the Abbé as a bird of prey hovers and circles over a field mouse before seizing it. She had long plotted a scheme which the bewildered priest could not possibly guess, and which she soon began to unfold, showing the genius that can be displayed in small things by isolated beings whose soul, incapable of apprehending the grandeur of true piety, has lost itself in the trivialities of devotion. The last and most frightful aggravation of his torments was that the nature of them prohibited Birotteau, an effusive man who loved to be pitied and comforted, from enjoying the little solace of relating them to his friends. The small amount of tact he owed to his shyness made him dread appearing ridiculous by troubling himself about such silly trifles. At the same time, these silly trifles made up his whole life, the life he loved, full of busy vacuity and vacu-

ous business, a dull, gray life, in which too strong a feeling was a misfortune, and the absence of all excitement is happiness. Thus the poor Abbé's paradise had suddenly become a hell. In short, his torments were intolerable.

The terror with which he contemplated an explanation with Mademoiselle Gamard grew daily, and the secret misfortunes which blighted every hour of his old age injured his health. One morning, as he put on his speckled blue stockings, he observed that the circumference of his calf had shrunk by eight lines. Appalled at such a terribly unmistakable symptom, he determined to make an effort to persuade the Abbé Troubert to intervene officially between himself and Mademoiselle Gamard.

When he found himself in the presence of the imposing Canon, who came out of a study crammed with papers, where he was always at work, admitting nobody, to receive him in a bare room, the Abbé was almost ashamed to speak of Mademoiselle Gamard's petty aggravations to a man who seemed so seriously occupied. But after having suffered all the misery of mental deliberation which humble, weak, or irresolute persons go through, even with regard to trifles, he made up his mind to explain the position to the Canon, not without feeling his heart swollen by extraordinary throbs. Troubert listened with a cold, grave air, trying, but in vain, to control some smiles, which, to intelligent eyes, might have betrayed the satisfaction of a secret desire. A flash sparkled in his eye when Birotteau described to him, with the eloquence lent by true emotion, the bitterness that was incessantly poured out for him; but Troubert at once covered his eyes with his hand, a gesture common to great thinkers, and preserved his habitually dignified attitude.

When the Abbé ceased speaking, he would have been puzzled indeed if he had tried to read any sign of the feelings he imagined he should excite in this mysterious priest, on his face, mottled now with yellow patches—yellower than even his usual bilious complexion. After a moment's silence, the Canon made one of those replies of which every

word must have been carefully studied to give them their full bearing, but which subsequently showed to capable persons the amazing depth of his mind and the power of his intellect.

He finally crushed Birotteau by saying that all these things surprised him the more, because, but for his brother's explanation, he would never have discerned them. He ascribed this dulness of perception to his important occupations, to his work, and to the supremacy of certain lofty thoughts, which did not allow of his heeding the trivialities of life! He pointed out, but without assuming the airs of wishing to censure the conduct of a man whose years and learning commanded his respect, that "the hermits of old rarely thought about their food, or their dwelling in the deserts, where they gave themselves up to holy contemplation," and that "in our days the priest could, in mind, make a desert for himself in every place." Then, returning to Birotteau, he remarked that "such squabbles were a quite new thing to him. During twelve years nothing of the kind had ever arisen between Mademoiselle Gamard and the venerated Abbé Chapeloud. As for himself, he could, no doubt, act as moderator between the priest and their landlady, since his friendship for her did not overstep the limits imposed by the laws of the Church on its faithful ministers; but then justice would require that he should also hear Mademoiselle Gamard. At the same time, he discerned no change in her; he had always seen her thus; he had willingly yielded to some of her vagaries, knowing that the excellent woman was kindness and sweetness itself; these little caprices of temper were to be ascribed to the sufferings caused by a pulmonary trouble, of which she never spoke, resigning herself to it as a true Christian." He ended by saying that "when he should have lived a few years longer with Mademoiselle, he would appreciate her better, and recognize the beauties of her admirable character."

The Abbé Birotteau came away bewildered. Under the absolute necessity of taking counsel with himself alone, he

gauged Mademoiselle Gamard by himself. The poor man thought that by absenting himself for a few days this woman's hatred would burn itself out for lack of fuel. So he determined to go, as he had done before now, to spend some time at a country place where Madame de Listomère always went at the end of the autumn, a season when, in Touraine, the sky is usually clear and mild. Poor man! He was thus carrying out the secret wishes of his terrible enemy, whose schemes could not be thwarted by anything short of monk-like endurance; while he, guessing nothing, and not knowing his own business even, was doomed to fall like a lamb under the first blow from the butcher.

Lying on the slope between the town of Tours and the heights of Saint-Georges, facing the south, and sheltered by cliffs, Madame de Listomère's estate combined all the charms of the country with the pleasures of the town. It was not more than a ten-minutes' drive from the Bridge of Tours to the gate of this house, known as l'Alouette (the Lark)—an immense convenience in a place where no one will disturb himself for any earthly thing, not even in quest of pleasure.

The Abbé Birotteau had been about ten days at l'Alouette, when one morning, at the breakfast hour, the lodge-keeper came to tell him that Monsieur Caron wished to speak with him. Monsieur Caron was a lawyer employed by Mademoiselle Gamare. Birotteau, not remembering this, and conscious of no litigious difficulty to be settled with anybody in the world, left the table, not without some anxiety, to meet the lawyer; he found him sitting modestly on the parapet of a terrace.

"Your intention of remaining no longer as a resident under Mademoiselle Gamard's roof being now quite evident—" the man of business began.

"Dear me, Monsieur!" cried Birotteau, interrupting him, "I never thought of leaving her."

"And yet, Monsieur," the lawyer went on, "you must certainly have expressed yourself to that effect to Mademoi-

selle, since she has sent me to inquire whether you intend remaining long in the country. The event of a prolonged absence, not having been provided for in your agreement, might give rise to some discussion. Now, as Mademoiselle Gamard understands it, your board—"

"Monsieur," said Birotteau in surprise, and again interrupting the lawyer, "I did not think it could be necessary to take steps, almost legal in their nature, to—"

"Mademoiselle Gamard, wishing to preclude any difficulty," said Monsieur Caron, "has sent me to come to an understanding with you."

"Very well, if you will be so obliging as to call again to-morrow, I, on my part, will have taken advice."

"So be it," said Caron with a bow.

The scrivener withdrew. The hapless priest, appalled by the pertinacity of Mademoiselle Gamard's persecution, went back to Madame de Listomère's dining-room looking quite upset. At his mere appearance every one asked him, "Why, Monsieur Birotteau, what is the matter?"

The Abbé, greatly distressed, sat down without answering, so overwhelmed was he by the vague vision of his misfortune. But after breakfast, when several of his friends had gathered round a good fire in the drawing-room, Birotteau artlessly told them the tale of his catastrophe. The hearers, who were just beginning to be bored by their stay in the country, were deeply interested in an intrigue so completely in keeping with provincial life. Everybody took the Abbé's part against the old maid.

"Why!" cried Madame de Listomère, "do you not plainly see that the Abbé Troubert wants your rooms?"

In this place the historian would have a right to sketch this lady's portrait; but it occurs to him that even those persons to whom Sterne's cognomology is unknown could surely not utter the three words MADAME DE LISTOMÈRE without seeing her — noble and dignified, tempering the austerity of piety by the antique elegance of monarchical and classic manners and polite distinction; kind, but a little

formal; speaking slightly through her nose; allowing herself to read "la Nouvelle Héloïse," and to go to the play; still wearing her own hair.

"The Abbé Birotteau must certainly not yield to that nagging old woman!" cried Monsieur de Listomère, a lieutenant in the navy, spending a holiday with his aunt. "If the Abbé has any courage, and will follow my advice, he will soon have recovered his peace of mind."

In short, everybody began to analyze Mademoiselle Gamard's proceedings with the acumen peculiar to provincials, who, it certainly cannot be denied, possess the talent of laying bare the most secret human actions.

"You have not hit the mark," said an old landowner who knew the country. "There is something very serious under this which I have not yet mastered. The Abbé Troubert is far too deep to be so easily seen through. Our good friend Birotteau is only at the beginning of his troubles. In the first place, would he be happy and left in peace even if he gave up his rooms to Troubert? I doubt it.—If Caron came to tell you," he went on, turning to the puzzled Abbé, "that you had intended to leave Mademoiselle Gamard, with the object of getting you out of her house . . . Well, you will have to go, willy nilly. That kind of man never risks a chance; they only play when they hold the trumps."

This old gentleman, a certain Monsieur de Bourbonne, epitomized provincial ideas as completely as Voltaire epitomized the spirit of his time. This withered little old man professed in matters of dress all the indifference of a proprietor whose estate has a quotable value in the department. His countenance, tanned by the sun of Touraine, was shrewd rather than clever. He was accustomed to weigh his words, to consider his actions, and he concealed his deep caution under a delusive bluntness. The very least observation was enough to discover that, like a Norman peasant, he would get the advantage in every stroke of business. He was great in œnology—the favorite science of the Tourangeaux. He had managed to extend the circle of one of his estates by

taking in the alluvial land of the Loire without getting into a lawsuit with the State. This achievement had established his reputation as a clever man. If, charmed by Monsieur de Bourbonne's conversation, you had asked his biography of one of his fellow provincials, "Oh! he is a cunning old fox," would have been the proverbial reply of all who envied him, and they were many. In Touraine, as in most provinces, jealousy lies at the base of the tongue.

Monsieur de Bourbonne's remark caused a brief silence, during which the members of this little committee seemed lost in thought.

At this juncture Mademoiselle Salomon de Villenoix was announced. She had just come from Tours, prompted by her wish to be of service to Birotteau, and the news she brought completely changed the aspect of affairs. At the moment when she came in, every one but the landowner was advising Birotteau to hold his own against Troubert and Gamard, under the auspices of the aristocratic party, who would support him.

"The Vicar-General," said Mademoiselle Salomon, "who has all the promotions in his hands, has just been taken ill, and the Archbishop has commissioned Canon Troubert to act in his place. The nomination to the canonry now depends entirely on him. Now yesterday, at Mademoiselle de la Blottière's, the Abbé Poirel was speaking of the annoyances Monsieur Birotteau occasioned to Mademoiselle Gamard, in such a way as to seem to justify the neglect which will certainly fall on our good Abbé. 'The Abbé Birotteau is a man who badly needed the Abbé Chapeloud,' said he, 'and since that virtuous Canon's death it has been proved that—' Then came a series of suppositions and calumnies. —You understand?"

"Troubert will be made Vicar-General," said Monsieur de Bourbonne solemnly.

"Come now," cried Madame de Listomère, looking at Birotteau, "which would you prefer—to be made Canon, or to remain with Mademoiselle Gamard?"

"To be made Canon," was the general outcry.

"Well, then," Madame de Listomère went on, "the Abbé Troubert and Mademoiselle Gamard must be allowed to have their way. Have they not conveyed to you indirectly by Caron's visit that, provided you consent to leave your rooms, you shall be made Canon? One good turn for another."

Every one exclaimed at Madame de Listomère's acumen and sagacity; but her nephew, the Baron de Listomère, said in a comical tone to Monsieur de Bourbonne:

"I should have liked to see the battle between the 'Gamard' and the 'Birotteau'."

But, for the Abbé's worse luck, the forces were not equal, with the worldly-wise on one side, and the old maid upheld by the Abbé Troubert on the other. The time was at hand when the struggle would become more decisive, and assume a greater scope and immense proportions.

By the advice of Madame de Listomère and most of her adherents, who were beginning to take a passionate interest in this intrigue flung into the vacuity of their country life, a footman was despatched for Monsieur Caron. The lawyer returned with amazing promptitude, a fact that alarmed no one but Monsieur de Bourbonne.

"Let us adjourn any decision till we have fuller information," was the advice of this Fabius in a dressing-gown, whose deep reflections revealed to him some abstruse plan of battle on the Tours chessboard.

He tried to enlighten Birotteau as to the perils of his position. But the "old fox's" shrewdness did not subserve the frenzy of the moment; he was scarcely listened to.

The meeting between the lawyer and Birotteau was brief. The Abbé came in looking quite scared, and saying, "He requires me to sign a paper declaring my decession."

"What barbarous word is that?" said the navy lieutenant.

"And what does it mean?" cried Madame de Listomère.

"It simply means that the Abbé is to declare his readiness to leave Mademoiselle Gamard's house," replied Monsieur de Bourbonne, taking a pinch of snuff.

"Is that all?—Sign it!" said Madame de Listomère to Birotteau. "If you have really made up your mind to quit her house, there can be no harm done by declaring your will."—The *Will* of Birotteau!

"That is true," said Monsieur de Bourbonne, shutting his snuff-box with a dry snap, of which it is impossible to render the full meaning, for it was a language by itself. "But writing is always dangerous," he added, placing the snuff-box on the chimney-shelf with a look that terrified the Abbé.

Birotteau was so bewildered by the upheaval of all his ideas, by the swiftness of events which had come on him and found him defenceless, and by the lightness with which his friends treated the most cherished circumstances of his lonely life, that he remained motionless, as if lost in the moon, not thinking of anything, but listening and trying to catch the sense of the hasty words everybody else was so ready with. He took up Monsieur Caron's document, and read it as though the lawyer's deed were in fact the object of his attention; but it was merely mechanical, and he signed the paper by which he declared himself ready and willing to give up his residence with Mademoiselle Gamard as well as his board, as provided by the agreement between them. When Birotteau had signed the deed Caron took it, and asked him where his client was to bestow the goods and chattels belonging to him. Birotteau mentioned Madame de Listomère's house, and the lady by a nod consented to receive the Abbé for some days, never doubting but that he would ere long be made a Canon. The old landowner wished to see this sort of act of renunciation, and Monsieur Caron handed it to him.

"Why," said he to the Abbé, after having read it, "is there any written agreement between you and Mademoiselle Gamard? Where is it? What are the conditions?"

"The paper is in my rooms," said Birotteau.

"Do you know its contents?" the old gentleman asked the lawyer.

"No, Monsieur," said Monsieur Caron, holding out his hand for the ominous document.

"Ah, ha!" said Monsieur de Bourbonne to himself, "you, master lawyer, are no doubt informed of what that agreement contains, but you are not paid to tell us." And he returned the deed of "decession" to the lawyer.

"Where am I to put all my furniture?" cried Birotteau, "and my books, my beautiful library, my nice pictures, my red drawing-room—all my things, in short!"

And the poor man's despair at finding himself thus uprooted was so guileless, it so perfectly showed the purity of his life, and his ignorance of the world, that Madame de Listomère and Mademoiselle Salomon said, to comfort him, and in the tone that mothers use when they promise a child a plaything:

"There, there, do not worry yourself about such silly trifles. We shall easily find you a home less cold and gloomy than Mademoiselle Gamard's house. If no lodging is to be found to suit you—well, one of us will take you as a boarder. Come, play a bit at backgammon. You can call on the Abbé Troubert to-morrow to ask his support, and you will see how well he will receive you."

Weak-minded persons are reassured as easily as they are frightened. So poor Birotteau, dazzled by the prospect of living with Madame de Listomère, forgot the ruin, now irremediably complete, of the happiness he had so long sighed for, and so thoroughly revelled in. Still, at night, before falling asleep, with the anguish of a man to whom a removal, and the formation of new habits, were as the end of the world, he tortured his mind to imagine where he could find as convenient a home for his library as that corridor. As he pictured his books astray, his furniture dispersed, and his home broken up, he wondered a thousand times why his first year at Mademoiselle Gamard's had been so delightful, and the second so wretched. And again and again this disaster was a bottomless pit in which his mind was lost.

The canonry no longer seemed to him a sufficient compensation for so many misfortunes; he compared his life to a stocking in which one dropped stitch leads to a ladder all the way down the web. Mademoiselle Salomon was left to him. But, losing all his old illusions, the poor priest no longer dared believe in a new friend.

In the *città dolente* of old maids there are several, especially in France, whose life is a sacrifice nobly renewed day by day to noble feeling. Some remain proudly faithful to a heart which death untimely snatched from them; martyrs to love, they learn the secret of womanliness of soul. Others succumb to a family pride which, to our shame, is daily waxing less; they have devoted themselves to make the fortune of a brother, or to the care of orphan nephews; such women are mothers though remaining maids. These old maids rise to the highest heroism of their sex, by consecrating every womanly feeling to the worship of misfortune. They idealize the concept of woman, by renouncing all the rewards of her natural destiny, and accepting only its penalties. They live enshrined in the beauty of their self-sacrifice, and men reverently bow their heads before their faded forms. Mademoiselle de Sombreuil is neither wife nor maid; she was, and always will be, an embodied poem.

Mademoiselle Salomon was one of these heroic creatures. Her sacrifice was religiously sublime, inasmuch as it would remain inglorious after having been a daily anguish. Young and handsome, she was loved; her lover lost his reason. For five years she had devoted herself with the courage of love to the mechanical joys of the unhappy man; she was so fully wedded to his madness that she did not think him mad.

She was a woman of simple manners, frank in speech, with a pale face not devoid of character, though the features were regular. She never spoke of the experiences of her life. Only, now and then the sudden shudder with which she heard the narrative of some dreadful or melancholy in-

cident betrayed in her the fine qualities evolved by great sorrows. She had come to live at Tours after the death of her companion in life. There she could not be appreciated at her true value; she was regarded as a "good creature." She was very charitable, and attached herself by preference to the weak and helpless. For this reason she had, of course, the deepest interest in the unhappy priest.

Mademoiselle Salomon de Villenoix, driving into town early next morning, took Birotteau with her, set him down on the Cathedral quay, and left him making his way toward the Close, where he was in great haste to arrive, to save the canonry, at any rate, from the shipwreck, and to superintend the removal of his furniture. He rang, not without violent palpitations, at the door of the house, whither for fourteen years he had been in the habit of coming, in which he had dwelt, and whence he was now to be forever exiled after dreaming that he might die there in peace like his friend Chapeloud.

Marianne was surprised to see him. He told her he had come to speak to Monsieur Troubert, and turned toward the ground-floor rooms in which the Canon lodged; but Marianne called out to him—

"The Abbé Troubert is not there, Monsieur le Vicaire; he is in your old rooms."

These words were a fearful shock to Birotteau, who at last understood Troubert's character, and the unfathomable depth of revenge so slowly worked out, when he saw him quite at home in Chapeloud's library, seated in Chapeloud's fine Gothic chair—sleeping, no doubt, in Chapeloud's bed, using Chapeloud's furniture, contravening Chapeloud's will, in short, disinheriting Chapeloud's friend;—that very Chapeloud who had for so long penned him in at Mademoiselle Gamard's, hindered his advancement, and kept him out of the drawing-rooms of Tours. By what magic wand had this transformation been effected? Were these things no longer Birotteau's?

Indeed, as he noted the sardonic expression with which

Troubert looked round on this library, Birotteau inferred that the future Vicar-General was secure of possessing forever the plunder of the two men he had so bitterly hated—Chapeloud as an enemy, and Birotteau because in him he still saw Chapeloud. At the sight a thousand ideas surged up in the worthy man's heart and wrapped him in a sort of trance. He stood motionless, and, as it were, fascinated by Troubert's eye, which was fixed on him.

"I cannot suppose, Monsieur," said Birotteau at last, "that you would wish to deprive me of the things that are mine. Though Mademoiselle Gamard may have been impatient to move you, she must surely be just enough to allow me time to identify my books and remove my furniture."

"Monsieur," said the Canon coldly, and betraying no sort of feeling in his face, "Mademoiselle Gamard told me yesterday that you were leaving; of the cause of it I know nothing. If she moved me up here, it was because she was obliged to do so. Monsieur l'Abbé Poirel has taken my rooms. Whether the furniture in these rooms belongs to Mademoiselle, I know not. If it is yours, you know her perfect honesty; the saintliness of her life is a guarantee for it. As to myself, you know how plainly I live. For fifteen years I slept in a bare room, never heeding the damp, which is killing me by inches. At the same time, if you wish to return to these rooms, I am ready to give them up to you."

As he listened to this terrible speech, Birotteau forgot the matter of the canonry; he went downstairs as briskly as a young man to find Mademoiselle Gamard, and met her at the bottom of the stairs in the large paved passage which joined the two parts of the house.

"Mademoiselle," said he, bowing, and not heeding the sour, sardonic smile that curled her lips, or the extraordinary fire that gave her eyes a glare like a tiger's, "I cannot understand why you did not wait till I had removed my furniture before—"

"What!" she exclaimed, interrupting him, "have not all your things been taken to Madame de Listomère's?"

"But my furniture?"

"Did you never read your agreement?" cried she, in tones which ought to be expressed in musical notation to show how many shades hatred could infuse into the accentuation of every word.

And Mademoiselle Gamard seemed to swell, her eyes flashed once more, and her face beamed; her whole person thrilled with satisfaction.

The Abbé Troubert opened a window to see better to read a folio volume.

Birotteau stood as if thunderstricken.

Mademoiselle Gamard trumpeted at him, in a voice as shrill as a clarion, the following words:

"Was it not agreed that, in the event of your leaving my house, your furniture was to become mine to indemnify me for the difference between what you paid me for your board and what I received from the late respectable Abbé Chapeloud? Now, as Monsieur l'Abbé Poirel has been made Canon—"

At these last words Birotteau bowed slightly as if to take leave; then he rushed out of the house. He was afraid lest, if he stayed any longer, he should faint, and so give his relentless foes a too great triumph. Walking like a drunken man, he got back to Madame de Listomère's town house, where, in a lower room, he found his linen, clothes, and papers all packed into a trunk. At the sight of those relics of his property, the unhappy priest sat down and hid his face in his hands to hide his tears from the sight of men. The Abbé Poirel was Canon! He, Birotteau, found himself homeless, bereft of fortune and furniture.

Happily, Mademoiselle Salomon happened to drive past. The doorkeeper, understanding the poor man's despair, signalled to the coachman. After a few words of explanation between the lady and the porter, the Abbé allowed himself to be led to his faithful friend, though he could only answer

her in incoherent words. Mademoiselle Salomon, alarmed by the temporary derangement of a brain already so feeble, carried him at once to l'Alouette, ascribing these symptoms of mental disturbance to the effect naturally produced on him by the Abbé Poirel's promotion. She knew nothing of the hapless priest's agreement with Mademoiselle Gamard, for the excellent reason that he himself did not know its full bearing. And as it is in the nature of things that comedy is often mixed up with the most pathetic incidents, Birotteau's bewildered answers almost made Mademoiselle Salomon laugh.

"Chapeloud was right," said he; "he is a monster."

"Who?" said she.

"Chapeloud. He has robbed me of everything."

"Then you mean Poirel?"

"No, Troubert."

At length they reached l'Alouette, where the priest's friends lavished on him such effusive kindness that by the evening he grew calmer, and they could extract from him an account of all that had occurred that morning.

Monsieur de Bourbonne, always phlegmatic, naturally asked to see the agreement which ever since the day before had seemed to him to contain the key to the riddle. Birotteau brought the fatal document out of his pocket, and held it out to the landowner, who read it hastily, presently coming to a sentence in these terms:

"Whereas there is a difference of eight hundred francs a year between the price paid by the late Monsieur Chapeloud and the sum for which the aforenamed Sophie Gamard agrees to lodge and board, on the terms hereinbefore stated, the said François Birotteau; whereas the said François Birotteau fully acknowledges that it is out of his power for some years to come to pay the full price paid by Mademoiselle Gamard's boarders, and more especially by the Abbé Troubert; and, finally, whereas the said Sophie Gamard has advanced certain sums of money, the said Birotteau hereby pledges himself to bequeath to her, as an indemnity, the furniture of

which he may be possessed at the time of his decease; or in the event of his voluntarily departing, for whatever cause or reason, and quitting the premises at present let to him, and no longer availing himself of the benefits contracted for in the agreement made by Mademoiselle Gamard hereinbefore—"

"Heaven above us! What impudence!" exclaimed Monsieur de Bourbonne. "And what claws the said Sophie Gamard has!"

Poor Birotteau, never conceiving in his childish brain of any cause which could ever separate him from Mademoiselle Gamard, had counted on dying under her roof. He had not the least recollection of this clause, of which the terms had not even been discussed at the time when, in his eagerness to lodge with the old maid, he would have signed all the documents she might have chosen to lay before him. His innocence was so creditable, and Mademoiselle Gamard's conduct so atrocious; there was something so deplorable in the fate of this hapless sexagenarian, and his weakness made him so pitiable, that in a first impulse of indignation Madame de Listomère exclaimed, "I am the cause of your having signed the act that has ruined you; I ought to make up to you for the comfort you have lost."

"But," said Monsieur de Bourbonne, "such proceedings constitute a fraud; there are grounds for an action—"

"Good, Birotteau shall bring an action. If he loses it at Tours, he will win it at Orleans; if he loses it at Orleans, he will win it at Paris!" cried the Baron de Listomère.

"If he means to bring an action, I should advise him first to resign his benefice in the Cathedral," said Monsieur de Bourbonne calmly.

"We will take legal advice," replied Madame de Listomère; "and we will bring an action if we ought. But this business is so disgraceful for Mademoiselle Gamard, and may prove so damaging to the Abbé Troubert, that we can surely effect a compromise."

After mature deliberation, everybody promised to assist

the Abbé Birotteau in the struggle that must ensue between him and the allies of his enemies. A confident presentiment, an indescribable provincial instinct prompted every one to combine the names of Troubert and Gamard. But not a soul of those then assembled at Madame de Listomère's, excepting the "old fox," had any accurate notion of the importance of such a conflict.

Monsieur de Bourbonne took the poor priest into a corner.

"Of all the fourteen persons present," said he in a low voice, "not one will be still on your side within a fortnight. If you then want to call in help, you will perhaps find no one but myself bold enough to undertake your defence, because I know the country, men, and things, and, better still, their interests. All your friends here, though full of good intentions, are starting on the wrong road, which you can never get out of. Listen to my advice. If you want to live in peace, give up your office in Saint-Gatien and leave Tours. Tell no one where you go, but seek a cure of souls far from hence, where Troubert can never again come across you."

"Leave Tours!" cried the Abbé, with unspeakable dismay.

It was to him a form of death. Was it not tearing up all the roots by which he held to the world? Celibates make habits take the place of feelings. And when to this system of ideas, by which they go through life rather than live, they add a weak nature, external things have an astonishing dominion over them. Birotteau had really become a sort of vegetable; to transplant it was to endanger its guileless functions. Just as a tree, in order to live, must always find the same juices at hand, and always send its filaments into the same soil, so Birotteau must always patter round Saint-Gatien, always trot up and down the spot on the Mall where he was wont to walk, always go through the same familiar streets, and constantly frequent the three drawing-rooms where evening after evening he played whist or backgammon.

"To be sure—I was not thinking," replied Monsieur de Bourbonne, looking compassionately at the priest.

Before long all Tours knew that Madame la Baronne de Listomère, widow of a Lieutenant-General, had given a home to the Abbé Birotteau, *Vicaire* of Saint-Gatien. This fact, on which several persons threw doubts, cut short all questions, and gave definiteness to party divisions, especially when Mademoiselle Salomon was the first to dare speak of fraud and an action at law.

Mademoiselle Gamard, with the subtle vanity and the fanatical sense of personal importance that are characteristic of old maids, considered herself greatly aggrieved by the line of conduct taken by Madame de Listomère. The Baroness was a woman of high rank, elegant in her habits, whose good taste, polished manners, and genuine piety were beyond dispute. By sheltering Birotteau she formally gave the lie to all Mademoiselle Gamard's asseverations, indirectly censured her conduct, and seemed to sanction the Abbé's complaints of his former landlady.

For the better comprehension of this story, it is necessary here to explain how much power Mademoiselle Gamard derived from the discernment and analytical spirit with which old women can account to themselves for the actions of others, and to set forth the resources of her faction. Escorted by the always taciturn Abbé Troubert, she spent her evenings in four or five houses where a dozen persons were wont to meet, allied by common tastes and analogous circumstances. There were two or three old men, wedded to the whims and tittle-tattle of their cooks; five or six old maids, who spent their days in sifting the words and scrutinizing the proceedings of their neighbors and those a little below them in the social scale; and finally, several old women wholly occupied in distilling scandal, in keeping an exact register of everybody's fortune, and a check on everybody's actions. They foretold marriages, and blamed their friends' conduct quite as harshly as their enemies'. These persons, filling in the town a position analogous to the capillary vessels of a plant, imbibed news with the thirst of a leaf for the dew, picked up the secrets of every household, dis-

charged them and transmitted them mechanically to Monsieur Troubert, as leaves communicate to the plant the moisture they have absorbed. Thus, every evening of the week, these worthy bigots, prompted by the craving for excitement which exists in every one, struck an accurate balance of the position of the town with a sagacity worthy of the Council of Ten, and made an armed police out of the unerring espionage to which our passions give rise. Then, as soon as they had found the secret motive of any event, their conceit led them to appropriate, severally, the wisdom of their Sanhedrim, and to give importance to their gossip in their respective circles.

This idle and busybody assembly, invisible though omniscient, speechless but forever talking, had at that time an influence which was apparently harmless in view of its contemptibility, but which nevertheless could be terrible when it was animated by a strong motive. Now, it was a very long time since any event had occurred within range of their lives to compare in general importance to each and all with the contest between Birotteau, supported by Madame de Listomère, and the Abbé Troubert with Mademoiselle Gamard. In fact, the three drawing-rooms of Madame de Listomère, Mademoiselle Merlin de la Blottière, and Mademoiselle de Villenoix, being regarded as a hostile camp by those where Mademoiselle Gamard visited, there lay behind this quarrel a strong party spirit with all its vanities. It was the struggle of the Roman Senate and people in a molehill, or a tempest in a glass of water, as Montesquieu said in speaking of the Republic of San-Marino, where public officials held their places but a day, so easy it was to seize despotic power.

But this storm in a teacup evolved as many passions in the actors as would have sufficed to direct the largest social interests. Is it not a mistake to suppose that time flies swiftly only to those whose hearts are a prey to such vast projects as trouble life and make it boil? The Abbé Troubert's hours were spent as busily, flew loaded with thoughts as anxious, and marked by despair and hopes as deep, as

could the racking hours of the man of ambition, the gamester, or the lover. God alone knows the secret of the energy we put forth to win the occult triumphs we achieve over men, or things, or ourselves. Though we do not always know whither we are going, we know full well the fatigues of the voyage. Still, if the historian may be allowed to digress from the drama he is narrating, to assume for a moment the functions of the critic—if he may invite you to glance at the lives of these old maids and of these two priests, to investigate the causes of the misfortune which vitiated their inmost core—you will perhaps find it proved to a demonstration that man must necessarily experience certain passions if he is to evolve those qualities which give nobleness to life, which expand its limits and silence the selfishness natural to all beings.

Madame de Listomère returned to town, not knowing that for some days several of her friends had been obliged to dispute a rumor concerning herself, and accepted by some, though she would have laughed at it had she heard of it, which attributed her affection for her nephew to almost criminal causes.

She took the Abbé to see her lawyer, who did not think an action an easy matter. The Abbé's friends, confident in the feeling that comes of the justice of a good case, or else dilatory about proceedings which did not concern them personally, had postponed the preliminary inquiry till the day when they should return to Tours. Thus Mademoiselle Gamard's allies had been able to make the first move, and had told the story in a way unfavorable to the Abbé Birotteau. Hence the man of law, whose clients consisted exclusively of the pious folks of the town, very much astonished Madame de Listomère by urging her on no account to be mixed up in such proceedings; and he closed the interview by saying that "he, at any rate, would not undertake the case, because, by the terms of the agreement, Mademoiselle Gamard was right in the eye of the law; that in equity, that is to say, out of the jurisdiction of the Court, Monsieur Birotteau would appear in the eyes of the Bench and of all honest

folks to have fallen away from the meek, peace-loving, and conciliatory character he had hitherto enjoyed; that Mademoiselle Gamard, regarded as a gentle person and easy to live with, had accommodated Birotteau by lending the money needed to pay the succession duties arising from Chapeloud's bequest, without demanding any receipt; that Birotteau was not of an age, nor of a nature, to sign a document without knowing what it contained and recognizing its importance; and that as he had ceased to live at Mademoiselle Gamard's after only two years' residence, whereas his friend Chapeloud had been with her for twelve years, and Troubert for fifteen, it could only be in accordance with some plan best known to himself. That, consequently, the action would be generally considered as an act of ingratitude," etc.

After seeing Birotteau to the head of the stairs, the lawyer detained Madame de Listomère a moment as he showed her out, and besought her, as she loved her peace of mind, to have nothing to do with the affair.

In the evening, however, the hapless Abbé, as miserable as a criminal in the condemned cell at Bicetre while awaiting the result of his petition to the court of appeal, could not keep himself from telling his friends of the result of his visit to the lawyer, at the hour before the card-parties were made up, when the little circle were assembling round Madame de Listomère's fire.

"I know no lawyer in Tours, excepting the solicitor for the Liberal party, who would undertake the case, unless he meant to lose it," exclaimed Monsieur de Bourbonne, "and I do not advise you to embark on it."

"Well, it is a rascally shame!" said the navy lieutenant. "I myself will take the Abbé to see that lawyer!"

"Then go after dark," said Monsieur de Bourbonne, interrupting him.

"Why?"

"I have just heard that the Abbé Troubert is appointed Vicar-General in the place of him who died the day before yesterday."

"Much I care for the Abbé Troubert!"

Unluckily, the Baron de Listomère, a man of six-and-thirty, did not see the sign made to him by Monsieur de Bourbonne warning him to weigh his words, and pointing significantly at a town councillor who was known to be a friend of Troubert's. So the officer went on:

"If Monsieur Troubert is a rogue . . ."

"Dear me," said Monsieur de Bourbonne, "why bring the Abbé Troubert's name into a matter with which he has no concern whatever?"

"Nay," said the lieutenant, "is he not in the enjoyment of the Abbé Birotteau's furniture? I remember having called on Monsieur Chapeloud and seeing two valuable pictures. Suppose they are worth ten thousand francs? Can you believe that Monsieur Birotteau ever intended to give in return for two years' board with this Gamard woman ten thousand francs, when the library and furniture are worth almost as much more?"

The Abbé opened his eyes very wide on hearing that he had ever owned such an enormous fortune. And the Baron went on vehemently to the end.

"By Jove! Monsieur Salmon, an expert from the Paris gallery, happens to be here on a visit to his mother-in-law. I will go to him this very evening with Monsieur l'Abbé, and beg him to value the pictures. From thence I will take him to that lawyer."

Two days after this conversation the action had taken shape. The solicitor to the Liberal party, now Birotteau's attorney, cast some obloquy on the Abbé's case. The Opposition to the Government, and some persons known to love neither priests nor religion—two things which many people fail to distinguish—took up the matter, and the whole town was talking of it. The expert from Paris had valued the "Virgin" by le Valentin, and the "Christ" by Lebrun, at eleven thousand francs; they were both choice examples. As to the bookcase and the Gothic furniture, the fashionable

taste, daily growing in Paris, for that style of work gave them an immediate value of twelve thousand francs. In short, the expert, on examination, estimated the contents of the rooms at ten thousand crowns.

Now, it was obvious that as Birotteau had never intended to give Mademoiselle Gamard this immense sum in payment of the little money he might owe her in virtue of the stipulated indemnity, there were grounds, legally speaking, for a new contract, otherwise the old maid would be guilty of unintentional fraud. So the lawyer on Birotteau's behalf began by serving a writ on Mademoiselle Gamard, formulating the Abbé's case. This statement, though exceedingly severe, and supported by quotations from leading judgments, and confirmed by certain articles of the Code, was at the same time a masterpiece of legal logic, and so evidently condemned the old maid that thirty or forty copies were maliciously circulated in the town by the opposite party.

A few days after this commencement of hostilities between the old maid and Birotteau, the Baron de Listomère, who, as commander of a corvette, hoped to be included in the next list of promotions, which had been expected for some time at the Navy Board, received a letter, in which a friend informed him that there was, on the contrary, some idea in the office of placing him on the Retired List. Greatly amazed by this news, he at once set out for Paris, and appeared at the Minister's next reception. This official himself seemed no less surprised, and even laughed at the fears expressed by the Baron de Listomère.

Next day, in spite of the Minister's words, the Baron inquired at the office. With an indiscretion, such as is not infrequently committed by heads of departments for their friends, a secretary showed him a minute confirming the fatal news, ready drawn up, but which had not yet been submitted to the Minister, in consequence of the illness of a head clerk. The Baron at once went to call on an uncle, who, being a député, could without delay meet the Minister at the Chamber, and begged him to sound his Excellency as to his views,

since to him this meant the sacrifice of his whole career. He awaited the closing of the sitting in his uncle's carriage in the greatest anxiety.

Long before the end his uncle came out, and as they drove home to his house he asked the Baron:

"What the devil led you to make war against the priesthood? The Minister told me at once that you had put yourself at the head of the Liberal party at Tours. Your opinions are detestable, you do not follow the line laid down by the Government, and what not! His phrases were as confused as if he were still addressing the Chamber. So then I said to him, 'Come, let us understand each other.' And his Excellency ended by confessing that you were in a scrape with the Lord High Almoner. In short, by making some inquiries among my colleagues, I learned that you had spoken with much levity of a certain Abbé Troubert, who, though but a Vicar-General, is the most important personage of the province, where he represents the ecclesiastical power. I answered for you to the Minister in person.—My noble nephew, if you want to get on in the world, make no enemies in the Church.

"Now, go back to Tours, and make your peace with this devil of a Vicar-General. Remember that Vicars-General are men with whom you must always live in peace. Deuce take it! When we are all trying to re-establish the Church, to cast discredit on the priests is a blunder in a ship's lieutenant who wants his promotion. If you do not make it up with this Abbé Troubert, you need not look to me; I shall cast you off. The Minister for Church affairs spoke to me of the man just now as certain to be a Bishop. If Troubert took an aversion for our family, he might hinder my name from appearing in the next batch of peers.—Do you understand?"

This speech explained to the navy lieutenant what Troubert's secret occupations were, when Birotteau so stupidly remarked, "I cannot think what good he gains by sitting up all night!"

The Canon's position, in the midst of the feminine senate which so craftily kept a surveillance over the province, as well as his personal capabilities, had led to his being chosen by the Church authorities from among all the priests in the town to be the unacknowledged proconsul of Touraine. Archbishop, General Préfet—high and low were under his occult dominion.

The Baron de Listomère had soon made up his mind.

"I have no notion," said he to his uncle, "of receiving another ecclesiastical broadside below the water-line."

Three days after this diplomatic interview between the uncle and nephew, the sailor, who had suddenly returned to Tours by the mail-coach, explained to his aunt, the very evening of his arrival, all the danger that would be incurred by the Listomère family if they persisted in defending that idiot Birotteau. The Baron had caught Monsieur de Bourbonne at the moment when the old gentleman was taking up his stick and hat to leave after his rubber. The "old fox's" intelligence was indispensable to throw a light on the reefs among which the Listomères had been entangled; he rose so early to seek his hat and stick, only to be stopped by a word in his ear:

"Wait; we want to talk."

The young Baron's prompt return, and his air of satisfaction, though contrasting with the gravity his face assumed now and then, had vaguely hinted to Monsieur de Bourbonne of some checks the lieutenant might have received in his cruise against Gamard and Troubert. He manifested no surprise on hearing the Baron proclaim the secret power possessed by the Vicar-General.

"I knew that," said he.

"Well, then," exclaimed the Baroness, "why did you not warn us?"

"Madame," he hastily replied, "if you will forget that I guessed this priest's occult influence, I will forget that you know it as well as I. If we should fail to keep the secret, we might be taken for his accomplices; we should be feared

and hated. Do as I do. Pretend to be a dupe; but look carefully where you set your feet. I said quite enough; you did not understand me. I could not compromise myself."

"What must we do now?" said the Baron.

The desertion of Birotteau was not a matter of question; it was the primary condition, and so understood by this council of three.

"To effect a retreat with all the honors of war has always been the greatest achievement of the most skilful generals," said Monsieur de Bourbonne. "Yield to Troubert; if his hatred is less than his vanity, you will gain an ally; but if you yield too much, he will trample on your body, for, as Boileau says, 'Destruction is by choice the spirit of the Church.' Make as though you were quitting the service, and you will escape him, Monsieur de Baron. Dismiss Birotteau, Madame, and you will gain Gamard her lawsuit. When you meet the Abbé Troubert at the Archbishop's, ask him if he plays whist; he will answer *Yes*. Invite him to play a rubber in this drawing-room, where he longs to be admitted; he will certainly come. You are a woman; try to enlist this priest in your interest. When the Baron is a ship's Captain, his uncle a Peer of France, and Troubert a Bishop, you can make Birotteau a Canon at your leisure. Till then yield; but yield gracefully, and with a threat. Your family can give Troubert quite as much assistance as he can give you; you will meet half-way to admiration. And take soundings constantly as you go, sailor!"

"Poor Birotteau!" said the Baronne.

"Oh! begin at once," said the old man as he took leave. "If some clever Liberal should get hold of that vacuous brain, he would get you into trouble. After all, the law would pronounce in his favor, and Troubert must be afraid of the verdict. As yet he may forgive you for having begun the action, but after a defeat he would be implacable. —I have spoken."

He snapped his snuff-box lid, went to put on his thick shoes, and departed.

The next morning, after breakfast, the Baroness remained alone with Birotteau, and said to him, not without visible embarrassment:

"My dear Monsieur Birotteau, I am going to make a request that you will think very unjust and inconsistent; but both for your sake and for ours you must, in the first place, put an end to your action against Mademoiselle Gamard by renouncing your claims, and also quit my house."

As he heard these words the poor priest turned pale.

"I am the innocent cause of your misfortunes," she went on; "and I know that but for my nephew you would never have begun the proceedings which now are working woe for you and for us. Listen to me."

And she briefly set forth the immense scope of this affair, explaining the seriousness of its consequences. Her meditations during the night had enabled her to form an idea of what the Abbé Troubert's former life had been. Thus she could unerringly point out to Birotteau the web in which he had been involved by this skilfully-plotted vengeance, could show him the superior cleverness and power of the enemy, revealing his hatred and explaining its causes; she pictured him as crouching for twelve years to Chapeloud, and now devouring and persecuting Chapeloud in the person of his friend.

The guileless Birotteau clasped his hands as if to pray, and wept with grief at this vision of human wickedness which his innocent soul had never conceived of. Terrified, as though he were standing on the verge of an abyss, he listened to his benefactress with moist and staring eyes, but without expressing a single idea. She said in conclusion:

"I know how vile it is to desert you; but, my dear Abbé, family duties must supersede those of friendship. Bend before this storm, as I must, and I will prove my gratitude. I say nothing of your personal concerns; I undertake them; you shall be released from money difficulties for the rest of your life. By the intervention of Monsieur de Bourbonne, who will know how to save appearances, I will see that you

lack nothing. My friend, give me the right to throw you over. I shall remain your friend while conforming to the requirements of the world.—Decide."

The hapless Abbé, quite bewildered, exclaimed:

"Ah! then Chapeloud was right when he said that if Troubert could drag him out of his grave by the heels, he would do it!—He sleeps in Chapeloud's bed!"

"It is no time for lamentations," said Madame de Listomère. "We have no time to spare. Come—"

Birotteau was too kind-hearted not to submit in any great crisis to the impulsive self-sacrifice of the first moment. But, in any case, his life already was but one long martyrdom.

He answered with a heart-broken look at his protectress, which wrung her soul: "I am in your hands. I am no more than a straw in the street!"

The local word he used, *bourrier*, is peculiar to Touraine, and its only literal rendering is a straw. But there are pretty little straws, yellow, shiny, and smart, the delight of children; while a *bourrier* is a dirty, colorless, miry straw, left in the gutter, driven by the wind, crushed by the foot of every passer-by.

"But, Madame," he went on, "I should not wish to leave the portrait of Chapeloud for the Abbé Troubert. It was done for me, and belongs to me; get that back for me, and I will give up everything else."

"Well," said Madame de Listomère, "I will go to Mademoiselle Gamard." She spoke in a tone which showed what an extraordinary effort the Baronne de Listomère was making in stooping to flatter the old maid's conceit. "And I will try to settle everything," she went on. "I hardly dare hope it.—Go and see Monsieur de Bourbonne. Get him to draw up your act of renunciation in due form, and bring it to me signed and witnessed. With the help of the Archbishop, I may perhaps get the thing settled."

Birotteau went away overpowered. Troubert had assumed in his eyes the proportions of an Egyptian pyramid.

The man's hands were in Paris, and his elbows in the Close of Saint-Gatien.

"He," said he to himself, "to hinder Monsieur le Marquis de Listomère being made a peer of France!—And then, 'With the help of the Archbishop, perhaps get the thing settled'!"

In comparison with such high interests, Birotteau felt himself a grasshopper; he was honest to himself.

The news of Birotteau's removal was all the more astounding because the reason was undiscoverable. Madame de Listomère gave out that as her nephew wished to marry and retire from the service, she needed the Abbé's room to add to her own. No one as yet had heard that Birotteau had withdrawn the action. Monsieur de Bourbonne's instructions were thus judiciously carried out.

These two pieces of news, when they should reach the ears of the Vicar-General, must certainly flatter his vanity, by showing him that, though the Listomère family would not capitulate, it would at least remain neutral, tacitly recognizing the secret power of the Church Council; and was not recognition submission? Still, the action remained *sub judice*. Was not this to yield and to threaten?

Thus the Listomères had assumed an attitude precisely similar to that of the Abbé Troubert in this contest; they stood aside, and could direct their forces.

But a serious event now occurred, and added to their difficulties, hindering the success of the means by which Monsieur de Bourbonne and the Listomères hoped to mollify the Gamard and Troubert faction. On the previous day Mademoiselle Gamard had taken a chill on coming out of the Cathedral, had gone to bed, and was reported to be seriously ill. The whole town rang with lamentations, excited by spurious commiseration. "Mademoiselle Gamard's highly-strung sensibilities had succumbed to the scandal of this lawsuit. Though she was undoubtedly in the right, she was dying of grief. Birotteau had killed his benefactress."

This was the sum and substance of the phrases fired off through the capillary ducts of the great feminine synod, and readily repeated by the town of Tours.

Madame de Listomère suffered the humiliation of calling on the old woman without gaining anything by her visit. She very politely requested to be allowed to speak to the Vicar-General. Flattered, perhaps, at receiving a woman who had slighted him, in Chapeloud's library, by the fireplace over which the two famous pictures in dispute were hanging, Troubert kept the Baroness waiting a minute, then he consented to see her.

No courtier, no diplomat, ever threw into the discussion of private interests or national negotiations greater skill, dissimulation, and depth of purpose than the Baroness and the Abbé displayed when they found themselves face to face.

Old Bourbonne, like the sponsor, in the Middle Ages, who armed the champion, and fortified his courage by good counsel as he entered the lists, had instructed the Baroness—

"Do not forget your part; you are a peacemaker, and not an interested party. Troubert likewise is a mediator. Weigh your words. Study the tones of the Vicar-General's voice.—If he strokes his chin, you have won him."

Some caricaturists have amused themselves by representing the contrast that so frequently exists between what we say and what we think. In this place, to represent fully the interesting points of the duel of words that took place between the priest and the fine lady, it is necessary to disclose the thoughts they each kept concealed under apparently trivial speech.

Madame de Listomère began by expressing the regret she felt about this lawsuit of Birotteau's, and she went on to speak of her desire of seeing the affair settled to the satisfaction of both parties.

"The mischief is done, Madame," said the Abbé. "The admirable Mademoiselle Gamard is dying." ("*I care no*

more for that stupid creature than for Prester John," thought he, "*but I should like to lay her death at your door, and burden your conscience, if you are silly enough to care.*")

"On hearing of her illness," said the Baroness, "I desired the Abbé to sign a withdrawal, which I have brought to that saintly person." ("*I see through you*," thought she, "*you old rascal; but we are no longer at the mercy of your vagaries. As for you, if you accept the deed, you will have put your foot in it; it will be a confession of complicity.*")

There was a brief silence.

"Mademoiselle Gamard's temporal affairs are no concern of mine," said the priest at length, closing the deep lids over his eagle eyes to conceal his excitement. ("*Ah, ha, you will not catch me tripping! But God be praised, those cursed lawyers will not fight out a case that might bespatter me! But what on earth can the Listomères want, that they are so humble?*")

"Monsieur," replied the Baronne, "the concerns of Monsieur l'Abbé Birotteau interest me no more than those of Mademoiselle Gamard do you. But, unluckily, religion might suffer from their quarrels, and in you I see but a mediator, while I myself come forward as a peacemaker. . . ." ("*We can neither of us throw dust in the other's eyes, Monsieur Troubert*," thought she. "*Do you appreciate the epigram in that reply?*")

"Religion! Madame," said the Vicar-General. "Religion stands too high for man to touch it." ("*Religion means me*," thought he.) "God will judge us unerringly, Madame," he added, "and I recognize no other tribunal."

"Well then, Monsieur," replied she, "let us try to make man's judgments agree with God's." ("*Yes, Religion means you.*")

The Abbé Troubert changed his tone.

"Has not Monsieur your nephew just been to Paris?" ("*You heard of me there, I fancy*," thought he, "*I can crush you—you who scorned me! You have come to surrender.*")

"Yes, Monsieur, thank you for taking so much interest

in him. He is returning to Paris to-night, ordered there by the Minister, who is kindness itself to us, and does not wish him to retire from the service." ("*No, Jesuit, you will not crush us*," thought she; "*we understand your little game.*") A pause. "I have not approved of his conduct in this affair," she went on, "but a sailor may be forgiven for not understanding the law." ("*Come, let us be allies*," thought she; "*we shall gain nothing by squabbling.*")

A faint smile dawned, and was lost in the furrows of the Abbé's face.

"He has done us some service by informing us of the value of those two pictures," said he, looking at them; "they will be a worthy ornament to the Lady Chapel." ("*You fired an epigram at me, Madame*," thought he; "*there are two for you and we are quits.*")

"If you present them to Saint-Gatien, I would beg you to allow me to offer to the Church two frames worthy of the place and of the gift." ("*I should like to make you confess that you coveted Birotteau's property*," thought she.)

"They do not belong to me," said the priest, well on his guard.

"Well, here is the deed that puts an end to all dispute," said Madame de Listomère, "and restores them to Mademoiselle Gamard." She laid the document on the table. ("*You see, Monsieur, how much I trust you*," thought she.) "It is worthy of you, Monsieur, worthy of your fine character, to reconcile two Christians, though I have ceased to take much interest in Monsieur Birotteau."

"But he is your pensioner," said he, interrupting her.

"No, Monsieur, he is no longer under my roof." ("*My brother-in-law's peerage and my nephew's promotion are leading me into very mean actions*," thought she.)

The Abbé remained unmoved, but his calm aspect was a symptom of violent agitation. Only Monsieur de Bourbonne had divined the secret of that superficial calm. The priest was triumphant.

"Why, then, did you take charge of his act of renuncia-

tion?" he asked, moved by a feeling similar to that which makes a woman fish for compliments.

"I could not help feeling some pity for him. Birotteau, whose feeble character must be well known to you, entreated me to see Mademoiselle Gamard in order to obtain from her, as the price of the surrender of—" the Abbé frowned—"of his *rights*, as recognized by many distinguished lawyers, the portrait—" the priest looked hard at Madame de Listomère —"of Chapeloud," she said. "I leave it to you to judge of his claim to it . . ." ("*You would lose if you fought the case*," thought she.)

The tone in which the Baroness uttered the words "distinguished lawyers" showed the priest that she knew the enemy's strength and weakness. Madame de Listomère displayed so much skill to this experienced connoisseur, that, at the end of this conversation, which was carried on for some time in the same key, he went down to see Mademoiselle Gamard to bring her answer as to the proposed bargain.

Troubert soon returned.

"Madame," said he, "I can but repeat the poor dying woman's words, 'Monsieur l'Abbe Chapeloud showed me too much kindness,' said she, 'for me to part from his portrait.'—As for myself, if it were mine, I would not give it up to any one. I was too faithfully attached to my poor dead friend not to feel that I have a right to claim his likeness against anybody in the world."

"Well, Monsieur, do not let us fall out over a bad picture." ("*I care for it no more than you do*," thought she.) "Keep it; we will have it copied. I am proud to have brought this sad and deplorable lawsuit to an end, and I have personally gained the pleasure of making your acquaintance.—I have heard that you are a fine whist player. You will forgive a woman for being curious," she added with a smile. "If you will come and play occasionally at my house, you cannot doubt that you will be heartily welcomed."

The Abbé Troubert stroked his chin. ("*He is caught;*

Bourbonne was right," thought she, "*he has his share of vanity.*")

In fact, the Vicar-General was at this moment enjoying the delicious sensation which Mirabeau found irresistible when, in the day of his power, he saw the gates of some mansion which had formerly been closed against him, opened to admit his carriage.

"Madame," replied he, "my occupations are too important to allow of my going into society; but for you what would not a man do?" ("*It is all over with the old girl; I will make up to the Listomères, and do them a good turn if they do me one,*" thought he. "*It is better to have them for friends than for enemies.*")

Madame de Listomère went home, hoping that the Archbishop would complete a pacification so happily begun. But Birotteau was to gain nothing even by his renunciation. Madame de Listomère heard next day that Mademoiselle Gamard was dead. The old maid's will being opened, no one was surprised to learn that she had constituted the Abbé Troubert her universal legatee. Her property was estimated at a hundred thousand crowns. The Vicar-General sent two invitations to the service and burial to Madame de Listomère's house—one for herself, and the other for her nephew.

"We must go," said she.

"That is just what it means!" exclaimed Monsieur de Bourbonne. "It is a test by which Monseigneur Troubert meant to try you. Baron, you must go all the way to the grave," he added to the navy lieutenant, who, for his sins, had not yet left Tours.

The service was held, and was marked by ecclesiastical magnificence. One person only shed tears. That was Birotteau, who, alone in a side chapel where he was not seen, believed himself guilty of this death, and prayed fervently for the soul of the departed, bitterly bewailing himself because he had not obtained her forgiveness for having wronged her.

The Abbé Troubert followed his friend's body to the grave in which she was to be laid. Standing on its brink,

he delivered an address, and, thanks to his eloquence, gave monumental dignity to his picture of the narrow life led by the testatrix. The bystanders noted these words in the peroration:

"This life, full of days devoted to God and to Religion —this life, adorned by so many beautiful actions performed in silence, so many modest and unrecognized virtues, was blighted by a sorrow which we would call unmerited if, here, on the verge of eternity, we could forget that all our afflictions are sent us by God. This holy woman's many friends, knowing how noble was her guileless soul, foresaw that she could endure anything excepting only such detraction as would affect her whole existence. And so perhaps Providence has taken her to rest in God only to rescue her from our petty griefs. Happy are they who here on earth can live at peace with themselves, as Sophie now reposes in the realms of the blessed, in her robe of innocence!"

"And when he had ended this grandiloquent discourse," said Monsieur de Bourbonne, who reported all the details of the funeral to Madame de Listomère that evening when, the rubbers ended and the doors closed, they were left alone with the Baron, "imagine, if you can, that Louis XI. in a priest's gown giving the holy-water sprinkler a final flourish in this style"—and Monsieur de Bourbonne took up the tongs and imitated the Abbé Troubert's movement so exactly that the Baron and his aunt could not help smiling. "In this alone," added the old man, "did he betray himself. Till then his reserve had been perfect; but now, when he had packed away forever the old maid he so utterly despised and hated, almost as much perhaps as he had detested Chapeloud, he, no doubt, found it impossible to hinder his satisfaction from betraying itself in a gesture."

Next morning Mademoiselle Salomon came to breakfast with Madame de Listomère, and as soon as she came in she said quite sadly:

"Our poor Abbé Birotteau has just been dealt a dreadful

blow which reveals the most elaborately studied hatred. He is made Curé of Saint-Symphorien."

Saint-Symphorien is a suburb of Tours lying beyond the bridge. This bridge, one of the finest works of French architecture, is nearly two thousand feet long, and the open squares at each end are exactly alike.

"Do you understand?" she added after a pause, amazed at the coolness with which Madame de Listomère heard this news. "The Abbé Birotteau will there be a hundred leagues from Tours, from his friends, from everything. Is it not exile, and all the more terrible because he will be torn from the town that his eyes will behold every day, while he can hardly ever come to it? He who, since his troubles, has hardly been able to walk, will be obliged to come a league to see us. At the present moment the poor man is in bed with a feverish attack. The priest's residence at Saint-Symphorien is cold and damp, and the parish is too poor to restore it. The poor old man will be buried alive in a real tomb. What a villanous plot!"

It will now, perhaps, suffice in conclusion of this story to report briefly a few subsequent events, and to sketch a last picture.

Five months later the Vicar-General was a Bishop; Madame de Listomère was dead, leaving fifteen hundred francs a year to the Abbe Birotteau. On the day when the Baroness's will was read, Monseigneur Hyacinthe, Bishop of Toryes, was about to leave Tours and take up his residence in his diocese; but he postponed his departure. Furious at having been deceived by a woman to whom he had offered a hand, while she was secretly holding out hers to the man whom he chose to regard as an enemy, Troubert again threatened to mar the Baron's career and hinder the Marquis de Listomère from receiving his peerage. In full council, at the Archbishop's palace, he uttered one of those priestly speeches, big with revenge, though smooth with honeyed mildness.

The ambitious lieutenant came to see this ruthless prelate, who dictated hard terms no doubt, for the Baron's conduct showed absolute subservience to the terrible Jesuit's will.

The new Bishop, by a deed of gift, bestowed Mademoiselle Gamard's house on the Cathedral Chapter; he gave Chapeloud's bookcase and books to the little Seminary; he dedicated the two disputed pictures to the Lady Chapel; but he kept the portrait of Chapeloud. No one could understand this almost complete surrender of all Mademoiselle Gamard's property. Monsieur de Bourbonne imagined that he secretly kept all the actual money to enable him to maintain his rank in Paris, if he should be called to sit on the Bench of Bishops in the Upper Chamber.

At last, on the very day before Monseigneur Troubert left Tours, the "old fox" detected the last plot which these gifts had covered, a *coup de grâce* dealt by the most relentless vengeance to the most helpless of victims. The Baron de Listomère disputed Madame de Listomère's bequest to Birotteau on the ground of undue influence! Within a few days of the first steps being taken in this action, the Baron was appointed to a ship with the rank of captain; the Curé of Saint-Symphorien was, by an act of discipline, placed under an interdict. His ecclesiastical superiors condemned him by anticipation; so the assassin of the late Sophie Gamard was a rogue as well! Now, if Monseigneur Troubert had kept the old maid's property, he could hardly have secured Birotteau's disgrace.

At the moment when Monseigneur Hyacinthe, Bishop of Troyes, was passing in a post-chaise, along the quay of Saint-Symphorien, on his way to Paris, poor Birotteau had just been brought out in an armchair to sit in the sun on a terrace. The unhappy priest, stricken by his archbishop, was pale and haggard. Grief, stamped on every feature, had completely altered the face, which of old had been so blandly cheerful. Ill health had cast a dimness that simulated thought over his eyes, which had been bright once with the pleasures of good living and devoid of any weight of ideas.

This was but the skeleton of that Birotteau who, only a year ago, vacuous but happy, had waddled across the Close. The Bishop shot a glance of contempt and pity at his victim; then he vouchsafed to forget him, and passed on.

In other times Troubert would certainly have been a Hildebrand or an Alexander VI. Nowadays the Church is no longer a political force, and does not absorb all the powers of isolated men. Hence celibacy has this crying evil, that by concentrating the powers of a man on one single passion, namely, egoism, it makes the unwedded soul mischievous or useless.

We live in a time when the fault of most governments is that they make man for society rather than society for man. A perpetual struggle is going on between the individual and the system that tries to turn him to account, while he tries to turn it to account for his own advantage; formerly, man, having really more liberty, showed greater generosity for the public weal. The circle in which men move has insensibly widened; the soul that can apprehend it synthetically will never be anything but a grand exception, since, constantly, in moral as in physical force, what is gained in extent is lost in intensity. Society cannot be based on exceptions.

Originally, man was simply and solely a father; his heart beat warmly, concentrated within the radius of the family. Later on he lived for the Clan or for a small Republic; hence the grand historical heroism of Greece and Rome. Next, he became the member of a caste, or of a religion, and often was truly sublime in his devotion to its greatness; but then the field of his interests was increased by the addition of every intellectual realm. In these days his life is bound up with that of a vast fatherland; ere long his family will be the whole human race.

Will not this moral cosmopolitanism, the thing the Roman Church hopes for, be a sublime mistake? It is so natural to believe in that noble chimera—the brotherhood of men. But, alas! the human machine has not such godlike proportions. The souls that are vast enough to wed a sentiment

that is the prerogative of a great man will never be those of plain citizens, of fathers of families.

Certain physiologists opine that, if the brain expands, the heart must necessarily shrink. That is a mistake. Is not what looks like egoism in the men who bear in their breast a science, a nation, or its laws, the noblest of passions? Is it not, in a way, a motherhood of the people? To bring forth new races or new ideas, must they not combine in their powerful brain the breast of the mother with the force of God? The history of an Innocent III., of a Peter the Great, of all who have guided an epoch or a nation, would at need prove to be, in the highest order of minds, the immense idea represented by Troubert in the depths of the Close of Saint-Gatien.

SAINT-FIRMIN, *April*, 1832.

A BACHELOR'S ESTABLISHMENT

PREFACE

THE SECOND VOLUME—the third part—of "Les Célibataires" takes very high rank among its companions. As in most of his best books, Balzac has set at work divers favorite springs of action, and has introduced personages of whom he has elsewhere given, not exactly replicas—he never did that—but companion portraits. And he has once more justified the proceeding amply. Whether he has not also justified the reproach, such as it is, of those who say that to see the most congenial expression of his fullest genius, you must go to his bad characters and not to his good, readers shall determine for themselves after reading the book.

It was the product of the year 1842, when the author was at the ripest of his powers, and after which, with the exception of "Les Parents Pauvres," he produced not much of his very best save in continuations and rehandlings of earlier efforts. He changed his title a good deal, and in that MS. correction of a copy of the "Comédie" which has been taken, perhaps without absolutely decisive authority, as the basis of the "Édition Définitive," he adopted "La Rabouilleuse" as his latest favorite. This, besides its quaintness, has undoubted merit as fixing the attention on one at least of the chief figures of the book, while "Un Ménage de garçon" only obliquely indicates the real purport of the novel. Jean-Jacques Rouget is a most unfortunate creature, who anticipates Baron Hulot as an example of absolute dependence on things of the flesh, *plus* a kind of cretinism, which Hulot, to do him justice, does not exhibit even in his worst degradation. But his "bachelor establishment," though undoubtedly useful for the purposes of the story, might have been changed

for something else, and his personality have been considerably altered, without very much affecting the general drift of the fiction.

Flore Brazier, on the other hand, the "Rabouilleuse" herself, is essential, and with Maxence Gilet and Philippe Bridau forms the centre of the action and the passion of the book. She ranks, indeed, with those few feminine types, Valérie Marneffe, La Cousine Bette, Eugénie Grandet, Béatrix, Madame de Maufrigneuse, and perhaps Esther Gobseck, whom Balzac has tried to draw at full length. It is to be observed that though quite without morals of any kind, she is not *ab initio* or intrinsically a she-fiend like Valérie or Lisbeth. She does not do harm for harm's sake, nor even directly to gratify spite, greed, or other purely unsocial and detestable passions. She is a type of feminine sensuality of the less ambitious and restless sort. Given a decent education, a fair fortune, a good-looking and vigorous husband to whom she had taken a fancy, and no special temptation, and she might have been a blameless, merry "sonsy" *commère*, and have died in an odor of very reasonable sanctity. Poverty, ignorance, the Rougets (father and son), Maxence Gilet, and Philippe Bridau came in her way, and she lived and died as Balzac has shown her. He has done nothing more "inevitable"; few things more complete and satisfactory.

Maxence Gilet is a not much less remarkable sketch, though it is not easy to say that he is on the same level. Gilet is the man of distinct gifts, of some virtues, or caricatures of virtues, who goes to the devil through idleness, fulness of bread, and lack of any worthy occupation. He is extraordinarily unconventional for a French figure in fiction, even for a figure drawn by such a French genius as Balzac. But he is also hardly to be called a great type, and I do not quite see why he should have succumbed before Philippe as he did.

Philippe himself is more complicated, and, perhaps, more questionable. He is certainly one of Balzac's *fleurs du mal;*

he is studied and personally conducted from beginning to end with an extraordinary and loving care; but is he quite "of a piece"? That he should have succeeded in defeating the combination against which his virtuous mother and brother failed is not an undue instance of the irony of life. The defeat of such adversaries as Flore and Max has, of course, the merit of poetical justice and the interest of "diamond cut diamond." But is not the terrible Philippe Bridau, the "Mephistopheles *à cheval*" of the latter part of the book, rather inconsistent with the commonplace ne'er-do-weel of the earlier? Not only does it require no unusual genius to waste money, when you have it, in the channels of the drinking-shop, the gaming-table, and elsewhere, to sponge for more on your mother and brother, to embezzle when they are squeezed dry, and to take to downright robbery when nothing else is left; but a person who, in the various circumstances and opportunities of Bridau, finds nothing better to do than these ordinary things, can hardly be a person of exceptional intellectual resource. There is here surely that sudden and unaccounted for change of character which the second-rate novelist and dramatist may permit himself, but from which the first-rate should abstain.

This, however, may be an academic objection, and certainly the book is of first-class interest. The minor characters, the mother and brother, the luckless aunt with her combination at last turning up when the rascal Philippe has stolen her stake-money, the satellites and abettors of Max in the club of "La Désœuvrance," the slightly theatrical Spaniard, and all the rest of them, are excellent. The book is an eminently characteristic one—more so, indeed, than more than one of those in which people are often invited to make acquaintance with Balzac.

The third story of "Les Célibataires" has a rather more varied bibliographical history than the others. The first part, that dealing with the early misconduct of Philippe Bridau, was published separately, as "Les Deux Frères," in the "Presse" during the spring of 1841, and a year or so later

in volumes. It had nine chapters with headings. The volume form also included under the same title the second part, which, as "Un Ménage de garçon en Province," had been published in the same newspaper in the autumn of 1842. This had sixteen chapters in both issues, and in the volumes two part-headings—one identical with the newspaper title, and the other "A qui la Succession?" The whole book then took rank in the "Comédie" under the second title, "Un Ménage de garçon," and retained this during Balzac's life and long afterward. In the "Edition Définitive," as observed above, he had marked it as "La Rabouilleuse," after having also thought of "Le Bonhomme Rouget." For English use, the better known, though not last or best title, is clearly preferable, as it can be translated, while "La Rabouilleuse" cannot.

TO MONSIEUR CHARLES NODIER

MEMBER OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY
CHIEF LIBRARIAN AT THE ARSENAL

HERE, my dear Nodier, you have a book full of those incidents which escape the action of the law under the shelter of domestic privacy; but in which the finger of God, so often called Chance, takes the place of human justice, while the moral is not the less striking and instructive for being uttered by a satirist. The outcome, to my mind, is a great lesson for the Family, and for Motherhood. We shall perhaps discover too late the effects of diminished paternal power. That authority, which formerly ceased only on the father's death, constituted the one human tribunal at which domestic crimes could be tried, and on great occasions the Sovereign would ratify and carry out its decisions. However tender and kind the mother may be, she can no more supply that patriarchal rule than a woman can fill a man's place on the throne; when the exception occurs, the creature is a monster.

I have never, perhaps, drawn a picture which shows more clearly than this how indispensable the stability of marriage is to European Society, what the sorrows are of woman's weakness, what dangers are involved in unbridled self-interest. It is to be hoped that a society based solely on the power of money may tremble when it sees the impotence of Justice over the complications of a system which deifies success and condones every means to achieve it: That it may have prompt recourse to the Catholic Church for purification of the masses by religious feeling, and by some education other than that of a lay University! Enough fine characters, enough instances of great and noble devotion will have been

seen in my "Scenes of Military Life"; so I may be allowed here to show what depravity results from the exigencies of war in certain minds which dare to act in private life as they would on the field of battle.

You have studied our times with a sagacious eye, and your philosophy betrays itself by more than one bitter reflection in the course of your elegant pages; you, better than any one, have appreciated the mischief done to the spirit of our nation by four different political systems.

I could not, therefore, place this narrative under the protection of a more competent authority. Your name, perhaps, may defend this work against the outcry it is sure to raise. Where is there a sufferer who keeps silence when the surgeon uncovers his most burning wounds? The pleasure of dedicating this drama to you is enhanced by my pride in betraying your goodwill for him who here signs himself one of your sincere admirers,

DE BALZAC.

A BACHELOR'S ESTABLISHMENT

IN 1792, the citizens of Issoudun rejoiced in a doctor named Rouget, who was regarded as a very deep fox. Some bold folks asserted that he made his wife very unhappy, though she was the handsomest woman in the town. Perhaps this wife was rather a simpleton. In spite of the inquisitiveness of friends, the gossip of outsiders, and the evil-speaking of the envious, the circumstances of the household were little known. Doctor Rouget was one of the men of whom it is commonly said that "they are not easy to get on with." And so, as long as he lived, little was said about him, and he was treated civilly.

His wife, a Demoiselle Descoings, somewhat sickly as a girl—one reason, it was said, why the doctor married her—had first a son, and then a daughter, born as it happened ten years after her brother, and not expected by the doctor, it was always reported, though he was a medical man. This late-born daughter was named Agathe.

These facts are so simple and commonplace that the historian hardly seems justified in placing them in the forefront of his narrative; but if they remained unknown, a man of Doctor Rouget's temper would be condemned as a monster, as an unnatural father, whereas he simply obeyed certain evil promptings which many persons defend under the terrible axiom: A man must know his own mind. This masculine motto has wrought misery for many wives. The Descoings, the doctor's father and mother-in law, wool-brokers, undertook alike the sale for landowners, or the purchase for wool-merchants of the golden fleeces of le Berry, and took commission from both parties. They grew rich

over this business, and then avaricious—the moral of many lives.

Their son, Descoings junior, a younger brother of Madame Rouget's, did not like Issoudun. He went to seek his fortune in Paris, and set up as a grocer in the Rue Saint-Honoré. This was his ruin. But what is to be said? A grocer is attracted to his business by a magnetic force as great as the repulsion which renders it odious to artists. The social forces which make for this or that vocation have been insufficiently studied. It would be curious to know what leads a man to become a stationer rather than a baker, when he is no longer compelled, as among the Egyptians, to succeed to his father's craft. Love had helped to form Descoings' vocation. He had said to himself, "And I, too, will be a grocer!" when he had also said something else on seeing his master's wife, a beautiful creature, with whom he fell over head and ears in love. With no auxiliary but patience and a little money sent him by his father and mother, he married the widow of the worthy Master Bixiou, his predecessor. In 1792 Descoings was regarded as a prosperous man.

At that time the parents Descoings were still living. They had retired from wool, and invested their wealth in buying Government stock—another Golden Fleece! Their son-in-law, almost sure ere long to be in mourning for his wife, sent his daughter to his brother-in-law's house in Paris, partly that she might see the capital, but also with a crafty purpose. Descoings had no children. Madame Descoings, twelve years older than her husband, was in excellent health, but she was as fat as a thrush after the vintage; and the wily Rouget had enough medical skill to foresee that Monsieur and Madame Descoings, in contradiction to the philosophy of fairy-tales, would live happy and have no children. The couple might become devoted to Agathe. Now, Doctor Rouget wanted to disinherit his daughter, and flattered himself it might be done if he transplanted her from home.

This young person, at that time the handsomest girl in

Issoudun, was not in the least like either her father or her mother. Her birth had been the occasion of a mortal feud between Doctor Rouget and his intimate friend, Monsieur Lousteau, formerly a sub-delegate, who had just left Issoudun. When a family migrates, the natives of a place so delightful as Issoudun have a right to inquire into the reasons of so unheard-of a step. To believe some sharp tongues, Monsieur Rouget, a vindictive man, had sworn that Lousteau should die by his hand alone. From a doctor the speech seemed as deadly as a cannon-ball. When the National Assembly abolished delegates, Lousteau left, and never returned to Issoudun. After the removal of this family, Madame Rouget spent all her days with Madame Hochon, the ex-sub-delegate's sister, her daughter's godmother, and the only person to whom she confided her woes. And what little the citizens of Issoudun ever knew about the beautiful Madame Rouget was told by this good soul, and not till after the doctor's death.

The first thing Madame Rouget said when her husband spoke of sending Agathe to Paris was, "I shall never see my child again!"—"And she was sadly right," worthy Madame Hochon would add.

The poor mother then became as yellow as a quince, and her condition by no means gave the lie to those who declared that Rouget was killing her by inches. The ways of her gawky ninny of a son must have contributed to the griefs of the unjustly accused mother. Never checked, or perhaps egged on by his father, the lad, who was altogether stupid, showed his mother none of the attention nor the respect due from a son. Jean-Jacques Rouget was like his father, but even worse; and the doctor was not very admirable, either morally or physically.

The advent of charming Agathe Rouget brought no good to her uncle Descoings. In the course of the week—or rather of the decade, for the Republic had been proclaimed—he was imprisoned on a hint from Robespierre to Fouquier-Tinville.

Descoings, being rash enough to opine that the famine was unreal, was fool enough to communicate his opinion—he imagined that thought was free—to several of his customers, male and female, as he served them over the counter. Citoyenne Duplay, the wife of the carpenter with whom Robespierre lodged, and herself the Grand Citoyen's housekeeper, unhappily for Descoings, honored his shop with her custom. This citoyenne considered the grocer's views as an insult to Maximilian the First. Ill pleased as she was by the manners of the Descoings couple, this illustrious *tricoteuse* of the Jacobin Club regarded Citoyenne Descoings' beauty as a kind of aristocracy. She added venom to their language while repeating it to her benevolent and kind-hearted master. The grocer was arrested on the usual charge of "monopolizing."

Descoings in prison, his wife made a stir to obtain his release; but her efforts were so ill judged that any observer hearing her appeal to the arbiters of his fate might have supposed that all she asked was a decent way of getting rid of him. Madame Descoings knew Bridau, one of the secretaries under Roland, Minister of the Interior, and the right-hand man of all who succeeded to that office. She brought Bridau into the field to save the grocer. This really incorruptible minister, one of those virtuous dupes who are always so admirably disinterested, took good care not to tamper with the men on whom Descoings' fate depended; he tried to explain! Now, to explain to the men of that time had about as much effect as though they had been asked to restore the Bourbons. The Girondin Minister, at that time combating Robespierre, said to Bridau, "What business is it of yours?" And each man to whom the worthy secretary applied made the same ruthless reply, "What business is it of yours?"

Bridau very prudently advised Madame Descoings to keep quiet; but she, instead of conciliating Robespierre's housekeeper, spouted fire and flame against the informer; she went to see a member of the Convention, who was in fear for himself, and who said, "I will speak of it to Robespierre."

On this promise the grocer's wife rested, and her protector naturally did not speak. A few sugar-loaves, a few bottles of good liqueur offered to Citoyenne Duplay would have saved Descoings.

This little accident shows that in a revolution it is as dangerous to trust for safety to an honest man as to a scoundrel; one can rely only on one's self.

Though Descoings died, he had the honor, at any rate, of going to the scaffold with André de Chénier. There, no doubt, grocery and poetry embraced for the first time in the flesh; for they have always had, and will always have, their private relations. Descoings' execution made a far greater sensation than André de Chénier's. Thirty years elapsed before it was recognized that France had lost more by Chénier's death than by that of Descoings.

Robespierre's sentence had this good result—until 1830 grocers were still afraid of meddling in politics.

Descoings' shop was not more than a hundred yards from Robespierre's lodgings. The grocer's successor failed in business; César Birotteau, the famous perfumer, established himself in the house. But, as if the scaffold had infected the place with disaster, the inventor of the Compound Sultana Paste and Eau Carminative was also ruined. The solution of this problem is a matter for occult science.

In the course of the few visits paid by the head clerk to the luckless Descoings' wife, he was struck by the calm, cold, artless beauty of Agathe Rouget. When he called to console the widow, who was so far inconsolable as to retire from the business after her second bereavement, he ended by marrying the lovely girl in the course of a "decade," as soon as her father could arrive, and he did not keep them waiting. The doctor, delighted at seeing things turn out even better than he had hoped, since his wife was the sole heiress of the Descoings, flew to Paris, not so much to be present at Agathe's marriage as to see that the settlements were drawn to his mind. Citizen Bridau, quite disinterested, and desperately in love, left this matter entirely to the perfidious doctor, who took

full advantage of his son-in-law's infatuation, as will be seen in the course of this history.

Madame Rouget, or, more accurately, the doctor, inherited all the estate, real and personal, of old Monsieur and Madame Descoings, who died within two years of each other. Finally, Rouget got the better of his wife, for she died early in 1799. And he had vineyards, and he bought farm land, and he acquired iron works, and he sold wool!—His beloved son could never do anything; he intended that the boy should be a landed proprietor, and allowed him to grow up in wealth and folly, confident that he would know as much as the most learned of them all in so far as that he would live and die like other folks.

From the year 1799, the calculating heads of Issoudun said that old Rouget had thirty thousand francs a year. After his wife's death the doctor still led a dissolute life, but with more method, so to speak, and in the privacy of home-life.

The doctor, a man of strong will, died in 1805. God knows what the good people of Issoudun had then to tell of the man's doings, and what stories were current of his horrible private life. Jean-Jacques Rouget, whom his father had of late kept tightly in hand, having discerned him to be a fool, remained unmarried for sufficient reasons, of which the explanation will form an important part of this story. His celibacy was in part the doctor's fault, as will be seen later.

It is now necessary to consider the results of the vengeance visited by the father on the daughter, whom he did not recognize as his, though you may take it for certain that she was his legitimate offspring. Nobody at Issoudun had observed one of those singular coincidences which make heredity a sort of maze in which science loses herself. Agathe was very like Doctor Rouget's mother. Just as gout is commonly observed to skip a generation, and to be transmitted from grandfather to grandson, so, not infrequently, a likeness does the same as the gout.

Thus Agathe's eldest child, who was like his mother, in character resembled his grandfather, Doctor Rouget. We will leave the solution of this problem also to the twentieth century, with that of the nomenclature of microscopic organisms, and our grandchildren will perhaps write as much more nonsense as our learned Societies have already produced on this obscure question.

Agathe Rouget was universally admired for one of those faces which, like that of Mary, the mother of the Lord, are forever virginal, even after marriage. Her portrait, still hanging in Bridau's studio, shows a perfectly oval face, spotlessly fair, without even a freckle, notwithstanding her golden hair. More than one artist, seeing the pure brow, the delicate nose, the shapely ear, the long lashes to eyes of the deepest blue, and infinitely mild—a face, in short, that is the embodiment of placidity—asks the great painter to this day, "Is that copied from one of Raphael's heads?"

No man ever made a better choice than did the Republican official when he married this girl. Agathe was the ideal housewife, trained by a country life, and never parted from her mother. She was pious without bigotry, and had no learning but such as the Church allows to women. And she was a perfect wife in the vulgar sense of the word; indeed, her ignorance of life involved her in more than one misfortune. The epitaph on the Roman matron, "She wrought needlework, and kept the house," is an excellent account of her pure, simple, and quiet life.

At the time of the Consulate, Bridau attached himself fanatically to Napoleon, who made him head of a department of state in 1804, a year before Rouget's death. Rich with a salary of twelve thousand francs and very handsome presents, Bridau cared not at all for the disgraceful proceedings by which the estate was wound up at Issoudun, and Agathe got nothing. Six months before his death old Rouget had sold part of his estate to his son, to whom he secured the remainder, in part by deed of gift, and in part as his direct heir. An advance on her prospective inheri-

tance of a hundred thousand francs secured under her marriage settlement represented Agathe's share of her father's and mother's fortune.

Bridau idolized the Emperor. He devoted himself with the zeal of a fanatic to carrying out the vast conceptions of this modern demigod, who, finding everything in France in ruins, set to work to reconstruct everything. His subordinate never said, "Stay, enough." Schemes, drafts, reports, précis, he undertook the heaviest burdens, so happy was he to assist the Emperor. He loved him as a man, he adored him as a sovereign, and would never endure the slightest criticism of his deeds or his schemes.

From 1804 to 1808 the official resided in a large and handsome apartment on the Quai Voltaire, close to his office and the Tuileries. A cook and a man-servant composed the establishment in the days of Madame Bridau's splendor. Agathe, always up the first, went to market, followed by her cook; while the man did the rooms she superintended the breakfast. Bridau never went to the office before eleven o'clock. As long as they both lived his wife found every day the same pleasure in preparing for him a perfect breakfast, the only meal he ate with enjoyment. All the year round, whatever the weather might be, Agathe watched her husband from the window on his way to the office, and never drew her head in till he disappeared round the corner of the Rue du Bac. She cleared the table herself, and looked round the rooms; then she dressed and played with the children, or took them for a walk, or received visitors till her husband returned. When the head-clerk brought home pressing work she would sit by his table in his study, as mute as a statue, and knitting as she watched him at work, sitting up as long as he did, and going to bed a few minutes before he went.

Sometimes they went to the play, sitting in the official box. On such occasions the pair dined at a restaurant; and the scene it presented always afforded Madame Bridau the keen delight it gives to persons unfamiliar with Paris.

Compelled, not infrequently, to accept invitations to the huge formal dinners given to her husband as head of a department, and chief clerk of a section of the Ministry of the Interior—dinners which Bridau duly returned—Agathe then followed the expensive fashions of the day; but on coming in she gladly shed this ceremonial splendor, and relapsed at home into provincial simplicity. Once a week, on Thursdays, Bridau entertained his friends, and on Shrove Tuesday he always gave a grand ball.

This brief record is the whole history of a married life which saw but three events—the birth of two children, one three years younger than the other, and Bridau's death, which took place in 1808; he was simply killed by night-work, just as the Emperor was about to promote him in his office, and to make him a Count and Privy Councillor. At this time Napoleon was devoting his attention to home administration; he overloaded Bridau with work, and finally undermined this valiant official's health. Napoleon, of whom Bridau had never asked the least thing, had inquired into his style of living and his fortune. On hearing that this devoted servant had nothing but his salary, he understood that here was one of those incorruptible creatures who gave dignity and moral tone to his rule, and he intended to surprise Bridau by some magnificent recompense. It was his anxiety to finish an immense piece of work before Napoleon should start for Spain that killed this worthy man, by bringing on an attack of acute fever.

On the Emperor's return, while in Paris for a few days preparing for the campaign of 1809, on hearing of Bridau's death, he exclaimed, "There are some men who can never be replaced!" Struck by a devotion that could never have expected such dazzling rewards as he reserved for his soldiers, Napoleon determined to create an Order, with handsome pensions attached, for his Civil servants, as he had founded that of the Legion of Honor for the Military. The impression made on him by Bridau's death suggested the formation of the Order of the *Réunion;* but he never had

time to complete the organization of this aristocratic class, which is now so utterly forgotten that, on meeting with the name of this ephemeral Order, most readers will wonder what was its badge: it was worn with a blue ribbon. The Emperor styled it the Order of the *Réunion*, with the intention of combining the Order of the Golden Fleece of Spain with that of the Golden Fleece of Austria. But Providence, as a Prussian diplomat said, was able to hinder such profanation.

The Emperor inquired into Madame Bridau's circumstances. The two boys had each a full scholarship at the Lycée Impérial, and the Emperor charged all the cost of their education to his privy purse. He then entered Madame Bridau's name on the Pension List for four thousand francs a year, intending, no doubt, to provide ultimately for her two sons.

After her marriage till her husband's death Madame Bridau had no correspondence whatever with Issoudun. Immediately before the birth of her second boy she heard of her mother's death. When her father died—she knew he had loved her but little—the Emperor's coronation was imminent, and the ceremony gave her husband so much to do that she would not leave him. Jean-Jacques Rouget, her brother, had never written her a word since she had quitted Issoudun. Though grieved by this tacit repudiation by her family, Agathe at last thought but seldom of those who never thought of her at all. She received a letter once a year from her godmother, Madame Hochon, and answered it in commonplace phrases, never heeding the warnings which the worthy and pious woman gave her in veiled hints.

Some time before Doctor Rouget's death, Madame Hochon had written to her goddaughter that she would get nothing from her father, unless she armed Monsieur Hochon with a power of attorney. Agathe hated the idea of worrying her brother. Whether Bridau supposed that this appropriation was in conformity with the common law of the province of Berry, or whether the clean-handed and upright husband

shared his wife's magnanimity and indifference to pecuniary interests, he would not listen to Roguin, his attorney, who advised him to take advantage of his high position to dispute the will by which the father had succeeded in robbing his daughter of her legal share. Husband and wife thus sanctioned what was done at Issoudun. However, Roguin had led the official to reflect on the damage to his wife's fortune. The worthy man perceived that in the event of his death Agathe would have nothing to depend on. He then looked into his affairs, and found that between 1793 and 1805 he and his wife had been obliged to draw out about thirty thousand francs of the fifty thousand which old Rouget had given to his daughter. He now invested the remaining twenty thousand in the funds, which then stood at forty, so Agathe had about two thousand francs a year in State securities. Thus, as a widow, Madame Bridau could live very decently on six thousand francs a year. Still very provincial, she was about to dismiss the man-servant, keep only the cook, and move to another set of rooms; but Madame Descoings, her intimate friend, who persisted in calling herself her aunt, gave up her apartment and came to live with Agathe, taking the departed Bridau's study for her bedroom. The two widows joined their incomes, and found themselves possessed of twelve thousand francs a year.

Such an arrangement seemed simple and natural. But nothing in life demands greater circumspection than arrangements which seem natural; we are always on our guard against what appears extraordinary; and so we see that men of great experience, lawyers, judges, physicians, and priests attach immense importance to such simple matters; and they are thought captious. The serpent under flowers is one of the finest emblems bequeathed to us by the ancients as a warning for our conduct. How often does a simpleton exclaim, as an excuse in his own eyes and those of others, "It was such a simple matter that any one would have been caught!"

In 1809 Madame Descoings, who never told her age, was sixty-five years old. Spoken of in her day as *La Belle Épicière*, she was one of those rare women whom time spares, and owed to an excellent constitution the privilege of preserving her beauty, though, of course, it could no longer bear serious examination. Of middle height, plump and fresh-colored, she had fine shoulders, and a warmly fair skin. Her light hair, tending to chestnut, showed no change of hue in spite of Descoings' disastrous end. She was extremely dainty, and liked cooking rich little dishes for her own eating; but though she seemed devoted to the kitchen, she was also very fond of the theatre, and, moreover, she indulged a vice which she wrapped in the deepest mystery—she put into the lottery. Is not the lottery, perhaps, the gulf which mythology has figured under the bottomless vat of the Danaids?

This woman—we may speak so of one who gambles in the lottery—spent rather too much in dress, no doubt, like all women who are so lucky as to remain youthful in advancing years; but with the exception of these little failings, she was the easiest creature to live with. Ready to agree with everybody, never contradictory, she was attractive by her gentle and contagious cheerfulness. She had especially one Parisian characteristic which bewitches retired clerks and traders—she understood a joke. If she did not marry a third husband, that, no doubt, was the fault of the times. During the wars of the Empire, marrying men found handsome and wealthy girls too readily to trouble their heads about a woman of sixty.

Madame Descoings tried to cheer Madame Bridau; she made her go often to the play, or out driving; she provided her with capital little dinners; she even tried to marry her to her son Bixiou. Alas! she was forced to confess to her the terrible secret that had been so jealously kept by herself, by the departed Descoings, and by her lawyer. The youthful, dressy Madame Descoings, who owned to no more than thirty-six, had a son of thirty-five named Bixiou, a widower,

and Major of the 21st foot, who was afterward killed at Dresden, as a colonel, leaving an only child, a boy. His mother, who never saw her grandson but in secret, spoke of the colonel as a son of her husband's by his first wife. Her confession was an act of expediency; the colonel's boy, who was at school at the Lycée Impérial with the two Bridaus, held a half-scholarship. This youth, very sharp and knowing even in his school-days, made a great reputation later as an artist and a wit.

Agathe cared for nothing on earth but her children, and would live only for them; she refused to marry again, alike from good sense and from faithful attachment. But a woman finds it easier to be a good wife than to be a good mother. A widow has two duties of a contradictory nature—she is a mother, and she ought to exert a father's power. Few women are strong enough to understand and play this double part. And so poor Agathe, with all her virtues, was the innocent cause of many misfortunes. As a result of her lack of insight, and the trustfulness habitual to lofty natures, Agathe was the victim of Madame Descoings, who dragged her into overwhelming disaster. This woman had a fancy for sets of three numbers, and the lottery grants no credit to ticket-holders. As housekeeper, she could spend the money allotted to the marketing in such ventures, and gradually increased the debt in the hope of enriching her grandson, her dear Agathe, and the young Bridaus. When it amounted to ten thousand francs she staked higher sums, always hoping that the favorite combination, which had not yet come out in ten years, would cover the loss. Then the debt swelled rapidly. It reached the sum of twenty thousand francs; Madame Descoings lost her head, and her numbers did not come out.

Then she wished to pledge her fortune in order to repay her niece, but her lawyer Roguin showed her that this honest scheme was impossible. The elder Rouget, at the death of his brother-in-law Descoings, had taken over his liabilities and assets, indemnifying the widow by a life-annuity,

charged on Jean-Jacques Rouget's estate. No usurer would consent to lend twenty thousand francs to a woman of sixty-five on a life interest worth about four thousand, at a time when ten per cent could be got anywhere. One morning Madame Descoings threw herself at her niece's feet, and with many sobs confessed the state of affairs. Madame Bridau did not reproach her. She sent away the man-servant and the cook; sold all but the most indispensable furniture; sold out three-quarters of her State securities, paid everything, and gave up her apartment.

One of the most hideous corners of Paris is, beyond doubt, the Rue Mazarine, between the crossing of the Rue Guénégaud, to where it opens into the Rue de la Seine behind the Palais de l'Institut. The tall, gray walls of the College and Library presented to the city of Paris by Cardinal Mazarin cast chill shadows over this strip of street; the sun rarely shines on it, the northerly blast sweeps through it. The poor ruined widow went to lodge on the third floor of a house in this damp, dark, cold spot.

Facing the house were the buildings of the Institute, where, at that time, were the dens of the wild beasts known to the townsfolk as artists, and to artists as *rapins*—daubers, art students. A man might go in a *rapin*, and might come out with the prize scholarship at Rome. This transformation was not effected without much amazing uproar at the time of year when the competitors were shut up in these cages. To take the prize, the aspiring sculptor had to execute, within a given time, a clay model of a statue; the painter, one of the pictures you may behold at the École des Beaux-arts; the musician had to compose a cantata; the architect, a design for a public building. At the time when these lines are penned, the menagerie has been transferred from those cold and gloomy buildings to the elegant Palace of the Fine Arts, a few yards from thence.

Madame Bridau's windows commanded a view of these barred cells, a singularly dreary lookout. To the north the

dome of the Institute closes in the prospect; looking up the street, the only delectation for the eye is the line of hackney cabs on the stand at the top of the Rue Mazarine. Indeed, the widow at last placed three boxes of earth outside her windows, in which she cultivated one of those aerial gardens so obnoxious to the regulations of the police, which somewhat purify the light and air.

The house, backing against one in the Rue de Seine, is necessarily shallow; the staircase turns in a spiral. The third floor is the top: three windows and three rooms—a dining-room, a little sitting-room, and a bedroom; at the back, on the other side of the landing, a small kitchen; under the roof two boys' rooms, and a vast unused garret. Madame Bridau chose this apartment for three reasons: the low rent, only four hundred francs, so she agreed for a nine years' lease; the nearness of her boys' school, for it was not far from the Lycée Impérial; and finally, it was in the quarter where she was accustomed to live. The interior of the rooms was in harmony with the building. The dining-room, hung with cheap flowered paper in yellow and green, with an unpolished tiled floor, had the barest necessary furniture —a table, two little sideboards, and six chairs brought from her old home. The drawing-room was graced by an Aubusson carpet, given to Bridau when his office was last refurnished. The widow placed in it that common mahogany furniture, finished with Egyptian heads, manufactured by the gross in 1806 by Jacob Desmalter, and covered with silk damask with white conventional roses.

Above the sofa, a portrait of Bridau in pastel, the work of a friend, attracted the eye at once. Though the art was not above criticism, the brow plainly showed the firmness of the unknown great citizen. The calm look of his eyes, at once proud and mild, was happily rendered; the sagacity to which the prudent lips bore witness, and the honest smile, the whole tone of the man of whom the Emperor spoke as *Justum et tenacem*, had been caught, if not with talent, at any rate with truth. As you looked at this portrait, you

could see that this man had always done his duty. His countenance expressed the incorruptibility which must be granted to many of the men employed during the Republic.

Opposite, over a card-table, was the brilliantly-colored picture of the Emperor by Vernet, in which Napoleon is seen riding past swiftly, and followed by his escort. Agathe allowed herself the luxury of two large bird-cages—one full of canaries, and one of exotic birds; she had taken up this childlike fancy since her loss—irreparable to her, and to many others.

As to Agathe's bedroom, by the end of three months it had become, what it remained till the luckless day when she was obliged to leave it—a chaos which no description could reduce to order. Cats were at home in the armchairs; the birds, sometimes set at liberty, left their traces on all the furniture. The poor, kind soul strewed millet and groundsel for them in all parts of the room; the cats found titbits in broken saucers. Clothes lay about. It was an atmosphere of provincialism and fidelity. Everything that had belonged to Bridau was carefully treasured there; his writing apparatus was kept with the care which the widow of a knight would have devoted to his armor. This woman's touching worship may be understood from a single fact—she had wrapped a pen in a sealed packet and written on it, "The last pen used by my dear husband." The cup from which he had drunk for the last time was under glass on the chimney-shelf. At a later date caps and "fronts" crowned the glass shades that covered these treasured relics.

After Bridau's death, his young widow of five-and-thirty never betrayed a trace of vanity or womanly pride. Parted from the only man she had really known, esteemed, and loved, who had never caused her the smallest pang, she no longer felt herself a woman; she cared for nothing; she ceased to dress. Nothing could be more unaffected or more complete than this surrender of married happiness and personal care. Some souls are endowed by love with the power of merging their individuality in another; and when that

other is gone, life is no longer possible. Agathe, who could henceforth live only for her children, felt the deepest grief at seeing how many privations they must suffer in consequence of her ruin. From the day when she moved to the Rue Mazarine there was a tinge of melancholy in her expression that was very touching. She did indeed count a little on the Emperor, but he could do no more than he was already doing; he allowed each boy, besides his scholarship, six hundred francs a year out of his privy purse.

As to the dashing Madame Descoings, she had an apartment similar to her niece's on the second floor. She had assigned to Madame Bridau a sum of a thousand crowns, to be taken as a first charge on her annuity; Roguin had taken care of this for Madame Bridau, but it would be seven years before this slow repayment could undo the mischief. Roguin, instructed to replace the fifteen hundred francs in dividends, banked the sums he retained on this account. Madame Descoings, reduced to twelve hundred francs a year, lived poorly enough with her niece. The two honest, helpless creatures had a woman in for the morning's work only. The aunt, who liked cooking, managed the dinner. In the evening, a few friends, clerks in the office for whom Bridau had found places, would come to play a game with the two widows.

Madame Descoings still clung to her three numbers, which obstinately refused, as she said, ever to come out. She still hoped, by one turn of luck, to repay all she had surreptitiously borrowed from her niece. She loved the two little Bridaus better than her grandson Bixiou, so strongly did she feel that she had wronged them, and so greatly did she admire the sweetness of her niece, who, at the very worst, never spoke the lightest word of blame. And so it may be supposed that she spoiled Joseph and Philippe. Like all persons who have a vice to be forgiven, this old gambler in the Imperial lottery would treat them to little dinners, cramming them with dainties. A little later Joseph and Philippe could, with the greatest ease, extract from her little gifts of money; the younger to buy stumps, chalk, paper, and prints;

the elder for apple-puffs, marbles, balls of string, and knives. Her passion had brought her down to being content with fifty francs a month for all expenses, that she might gamble with the remainder.

Madame Bridau on her part, out of motherly affection, did not allow her expenses to exceed that sum. To punish herself for her foolish confidence, she now heroically cut off all her little enjoyments. It often happens to a timid soul and narrow intellect that a single experience of crushed feelings and aroused suspicions leads to such an extreme development of a failing that it acquires the consistency of a virtue. The Emperor might forget, she told herself; he might be killed in battle—her pension would die with him. She shuddered as she saw such probabilities of her children being left absolutely penniless. Incompetent as she was to understand Roguin's calculations, when he tried to prove to her that in seven years a charge of three thousand francs a year on Madame Descoings' annuity would replace the securities she had sold, she put no trust in the lawyer, or her aunt, or the State; she relied only on herself and her own thrift. By saving a thousand crowns a year out of her pension, in ten years she would have thirty thousand francs, which would at any rate secure her children fifteen hundred francs a year. At six-and-thirty she had a right to hope that she might live twenty years, and by carrying out this system she might leave each of them enough for the bare necessities of life.

Thus the two widows had sunk from unreal opulence to voluntary penury—one under the influence of a vice, the other under the promptings of the purest virtue. None of all these trivial things are foreign to the deep lesson to be derived from this story, founded on the sordid interests of common life, but with a scope all the wider perhaps in consequence.

The view over the schools, the scampering art students in the street, the need for looking at the sky, if only to turn from the hideous outlook on every side of that mouldy street; the countenance of the portrait, full of soul and dignity in

spite of the amateurish handling; the association of the rich coloring, harmonized by age, of this quiet and peaceful home, the greenery of its hanging gardens, the poverty of the household, the mother's preference for her elder son, and her dislike to the younger boy's taste—in short, the sum-total of the incidents and circumstances which form the prologue to the story, constituted perhaps the active causes to which we owe Joseph Bridau, one of the great painters of the modern French school.

Philippe, the elder of Bridau's two children, was strikingly like his mother. Though fair-haired and blue-eyed, he had a daring look which was often mistaken for high spirit and courage. Old Claparon, who had entered the office at the same time with Bridau, and was one of the faithful friends who came in the evening to play a game with the two widows, would say of Philippe two or three times in a month, as he patted his cheek, "Here is a brave little man, who can always say bo to a goose!" The child, thus encouraged, assumed a sort of pluck out of bravado. His temper having taken this bent, he became skilled in all physical exercises. By dint of fighting at school, he acquired the hardihood and scorn of pain which give rise to military courage, but, of course, he also acquired the greatest aversion for study; for a public school can never solve the difficult problem of developing equally and simultaneously the powers of the body and of the mind. Agathe inferred from his purely superficial resemblance to her that they must agree in mind, and firmly believed that she should some day find in him her own refined feeling, ennobled by a man's force of nature.

At the time when Madame Bridau moved to the gloomy apartment in the Rue Mazarine, Philippe was fifteen, and the engaging ways of a youth at that age confirmed his mother's belief. Joseph, who was three years younger, was an ugly likeness of his father. In the first place, his bushy black hair was always ill-kempt whatever was done to it; while his

brother, though he was never quiet, was always trim; then, by some inscrutable fatality—but a too persistent fatality grows into a habit—Joseph could never keep his clothes clean; dressed in a new suit, he made old clothes of them at once. The elder, out of personal vanity, took care of his things. Unconsciously, the mother accustomed herself to scold Joseph and hold up the example of his brother. So Agathe did not always show the same face to her two boys; and when she went to fetch them from school, she would say of Joseph, "I wonder what state his things will be in!" All these trifles drove her heart into the gulf of favoritism.

No one of all the very commonplace people who formed the two widows' visiting circle—neither old des Bruel, nor old Claparon, nor Desroches senior, nor even the Abbé Loraux, Agathe's director, ever noticed Joseph's powers of observation. Possessed by this taste, the future colorist paid no heed to anything that concerned him; and so long as he was a child, this instinct looked so like stupidity that his father had been somewhat uneasy about him. The extraordinary size of his skull, and the breadth of his forehead, had at first led them to fear that the child had water on the brain. His face, still so rugged, and odd enough to be thought ugly by those who cannot see the intellectual purpose of a countenance, was, during his boyhood, rather pinched. The features, which developed later, seemed crushed together, and the intensity with which the child studied everything puckered them still more. Thus Philippe soothed all his mother's vanities, while Joseph never won her a compliment. While Joseph was silent and dreamy, Philippe could bring out those clever speeches and repartees which tempt parents to believe that their children will be remarkable men. The mother looked for wonders from Philippe, she founded no hopes on Joseph.

Joseph's predisposition to art was brought to light by a most commonplace incident. In 1812, during the Easter holidays, as he was returning from a walk in the Tuileries Gardens with his brother and Madame Descoings, he saw a

student scrawl a caricature of some professor on a wall, and admiration of this chalk sketch, full of sparkling fun, riveted him to the spot. On the following day the boy placed himself at a window to watch the students going in by the door in the Rue Mazarine; he stole downstairs, and slipped into the long courtyard of the Institute, where he saw a number of statues and busts, marble rough-hewn, terra-cotta figures, studies in plaster; he gazed at them in a fever of excitement, for his instinct was roused, his vocation seethed within him. He went into a large low room, the door standing open, and there saw a dozen or so of lads drawing a statue; he was at once the butt of their tricks.

"Pretty Dick! pretty Dick!" said the first to spy him, flinging some bread crumbs at him.

"Whose brat is that?"

"Heavens, how ugly he is!"

In short, for a quarter of an hour Joseph stood the horseplay of the studio—that of the great sculptor Chaudet; but after making game of him, the pupils were struck by his tenacity and his expression, and asked him what he wanted. Joseph replied that he very much wished to learn to draw; and thereupon everybody was by way of encouraging him. The boy, taken in by this friendly tone, explained that he was Madame Bridau's son.

"Oh! then, indeed! If you are Madame Bridau's son," they sang out from every corner of the studio, "you may become a great man. Hurrah for Madame Bridau's son. Is your mother pretty? To judge from your pumpkin head as a specimen, she ought to be a sweet one to look at."

"So you want to be an artist," said the eldest student, leaving his place, and coming to Joseph to play him some trick. "But you must be plucky, you know, and put up with dreadful things. Yes, there are trials, tests that are enough to break your legs and arms. All these fellows that you see—well, every one of them has passed the tests. Now, that for one, for instance, he went for seven days and nights without food. Come, let's see if you are fit to become an artist?"

He took one of the boy's arms and placed it straight up in the air, then he set the other at an angle as if about to strike out.

"We call that the ordeal of the telegraph," said he. "If you stand like that without letting your arms sink, or changing your attitude for a quarter of an hour—well, you will have shown that you have good pluck!"

"Now, little chap, show your mettle," said the others. "By Jove, you must go through something to become an artist."

Joseph, in all the good faith of a boy of thirteen, remained motionless for about five minutes, and all the pupils looked at him very gravely.

"Oh! your arm is sinking," said one.

"Come, steady!" said another.

"By Jove, the Emperor Napoleon stood for at least a month, just as you see him there," added a third, pointing to Chaudet's fine statue.

The Emperor was standing holding the Imperial sceptre; and this work was thrown down in 1814 from the column it finished so nobly.

In about ten minutes the perspiration was standing on Joseph's brow. At this moment a little man came in, bald, pale, and fragile; respectful silence reigned in the studio.

"Now then, you scamps, what are you about?" he asked, looking at the studio victim.

"The little chap is sitting to us," said the tall student who had placed Joseph in position.

"Are not you ashamed of torturing a poor child so?" said Chaudet, putting down Joseph's arms. "How long have you been standing there?" he asked, with a friendly pat on the boy's cheek.

"About a quarter of an hour."

"And what brings you here?"

"I want to be an artist."

"And where have you come from; whom do you belong to?"

"From mamma's."

"Oh, ho! from mamma's!" cried the pupils.

"Silence among the easels!" cried Chaudet. "What is your mother?"

"She is Madame Bridau. My papa, who is dead, was a friend of the Emperor's. And if you will only teach me to draw, the Emperor will pay whatever you ask."

"His father was head of a department in the Ministry of the Interior," cried Chaudet, struck by a reminiscence. "And you want already to be an artist?"

"Yes, sir."

"Come here as often as you like; you may play here. Give him an easel, paper, and chalk, and leave him to himself. Remember, you pickles, that his father did me a service," said the sculptor. "Here, you, Well-rope, go and buy something nice—some cakes and sugar-plums," he added, giving some silver to the lad who had bullied Joseph. "We shall soon see if you are an artist by the way you munch cabbage," he went on, stroking Joseph's chin.

Then he went the round of his pupils, Joseph following him, listening and trying to understand. The treat was brought; all the lads, the sculptor himself, and the child had their share. Then Joseph was made much of, as he had before been made game of. This scene, in which the rough fun and good heart of the artist tribe were revealed to him, as he understood by instinct, made a prodigious impression on the boy. This glimpse of Chaudet the sculptor, snatched away by a too early death while the Emperor's patronage promised him glory, was like a vision to Joseph.

The child said nothing to his mother of this escapade, but every Sunday and Thursday he spent three hours in Chaudet's studio. Madame Descoings, always ready to humor the cherubs' fancies, henceforth gave Joseph charcoal, red chalk, lithographs, and drawing-paper. At the Lycée Impérial the budding artist sketched the masters, took portraits of his school-fellows, scrawled on the dormitory walls, and was astonishingly diligent in the drawing-class. Lemire, his

master there, astounded not merely by his talent, but by the progress he made, came to speak to Madame Bridau of her son's evident vocation. Agathe, a true provincial, and as ignorant of art as she was accomplished in housekeeping, was filled with alarms. When Lemire was gone, she burst into tears.

"Oh!" she cried, as Madame Descoings came in, "I am undone! Joseph, whom I meant to make a clerk, who has his way ready made for him in the Ministry of the Interior, and guarded by the shade of his father, would have been at the head of an office by the time he was five-and-twenty.—Well, he is bent on being a painter—a beggar's trade. I always knew that boy would bring me nothing but trouble!"

Madame Descoings had to confess that for some months past she had been encouraging Joseph in his passion and screening his stolen Sunday and Thursday visits to the School of Art. At the Salon, whither she had taken him, the little fellow's interest in the pictures was something miraculous.

"And if he understands painting at the age of thirteen, my dear, your Joseph will be a man of genius."

"I dare say; and see what genius brought his father to! To die, worked to death, at forty."

Late in the autumn, just as Joseph was reaching the age of fourteen, Agathe, in spite of Madame Descoings' entreaties, went across to see Chaudet, and insist that her son should not be led into mischief. She found Chaudet in his blue overall, modelling his latest statue. He was barely civil in his reception of the widow of the man who had once done him a service in very critical circumstances, but his health was already undermined; he was working with the fevered energy which enables a man to do in a few moments things which it is difficult to achieve in as many months; he had just hit on a thing he had long been striving for, and handled his clay and modelling tool with hasty jerks which, to Agathe, in her ignorance, seemed to be those of a maniac. In any other frame of mind Chaudet would have laughed outright; but as he heard this mother blaspheming Art, be-

wailing the fate forced upon her son, and requesting that he might never more be admitted to the studio, he broke out in sacred fury.

"I am under obligations to your lamented husband; I hoped to make him some return by helping your son, by watching over your little Joseph's first step in the noblest of all careers!" he exclaimed. "Yes, Madame, I may tell you, if you do not know it, that a great artist is a king, more than a king; for, in the first place, he is happier, and he is independent; he lives as he pleases; and besides, he rules over the world of imagination. Your son has a splendid future before him! Such talents as his are rare; they are not revealed so young in any artists but a Giotto, a Raphael, a Titian, a Rubens, a Murillo—for he will be a painter, I think, rather than a sculptor. Light of Heaven! If I had such a boy, I should be as happy as the Emperor is in being the father of the King of Rome!—Well, Madame, you are mistress of your child's fate. Go, make an idiot of him, a man who will only put one leg before the other, a wretched scrivener; you will be committing murder! I only hope that, in spite of all your efforts, he will always remain an artist! A vocation is stronger than all the obstacles opposed to its working. A vocation!—the word means a call—Ah! it is election by God!

"But you will make your child miserable!"

He violently flung the handful of clay he had ceased to need into a tub, and said to his model, "That will do for to-day."

Agathe looked up, and saw a naked woman sitting on a stool, in a corner of the studio which had not yet come under her eye. At the sight she fled in horror.

"You are not to let little Bridau come here any more," said Chaudet to his pupils. "Madame his mother does not approve."

"Hoo-oo!" shouted the lads as Agathe closed the door.

"And Joseph has been going to that place!" said the poor woman, in consternation at what she had seen and heard.

As soon as the students of painting and sculpture heard that Madame Bridau would not allow her son to become an artist, all their delight was to get Joseph to their own rooms. In spite of the promise extracted from him by his mother not to go any more to the Institute, the boy often stole into a studio that Regnauld used there, and was encouraged to daub canvas. When the widow tried to complain, Chaudet's pupils told her that Regnauld was not Chaudet, that she had not made them the guardians of Monsieur her son, and laughed at her in a thousand ways. The rascally students composed and sang a ballad on Madame Bridau in a hundred and thirty-seven verses.

On the evening of that melancholy day, Agathe refused to play cards, and sat in her armchair, a prey to such deep melancholy that the tears welled up to her beautiful eyes.

"What is the matter, Madame Bridau?" asked old Claparon.

"She believes that her son will have to beg his bread because he has the bump of painting," said Madame Descoings. "But I have not the smallest misgiving as to my stepson's boy, little Bixiou, though he too has a passion for drawing. Men are made to fight their way."

"Madame is right," said Desroches, a hard, dry man, who in spite of his abilities had never been able to rise in his office. "I happily have but one son; for with my salary of eighteen hundred francs, and my wife, who makes barely twelve hundred by her license to sell stamps, what would have become of me? I have articled my boy to an attorney; he gets twenty-five francs a month and his breakfast, and I give him the same sum; he dines and sleeps at home. That is all he has; he must needs go on, and he will make his way. I have cut out more work for my youngster than if he were at college, and he will be an attorney some day; when I treat him to the play he is as happy as a king, he hugs me! Oh! I keep him tight! He has to account to me for all his money. You are too easy with your children. If your boy wants to try roughing it, let him alone! He will turn out all right."

"For my part," said du Bruel, a retired head-clerk who had just taken his pension, "my boy is but sixteen, and his mother worships him. But I would not listen to a vocation that declared itself at such an early age. I think boys want directing."

"You, Monsieur, are rich; you are a man, and have but one child," said Agathe.

"On my honor," Claparon went on, "our children are our tyrants (*in hearts*). Mine drives me mad; he has brought me to ruin, and at last I have given him up altogether (*independence*). Well, he is all the better pleased, and so am I. The rascal was partly the death of his poor mother. He became a commercial traveller, and it was the very life for him; no sooner was he in the house than he wanted to be out of it; he never could rest, he never would learn. All I pray Heaven is that I may die without seeing him disgrace my name!—Those who have no children miss many pleasures, but they also escape many troubles."

"Just like a father!" said Agathe, beginning to cry again.

"What I tell you, my dear Madame Bridau, is to prove to you that you must allow your boy to become a painter; otherwise you will lose your time—"

"If you were capable of keeping him in hand," said the harsh Desroches, "I would tell you to oppose his wishes; but, seeing you so weak with them, I say—let him daub and scribble."

"Lost!" said Claparon.

"What? Lost!" cried the unhappy mother.

"Oh, yes, my *Independence in hearts*—that dry stick Desroches always makes me lose."

"Be comforted, Agathe," said Madame Descoings; "Joseph will be a great man."

At the end of this discussion, which was like every earthly discussion, the widow's friends united in one opinion, which by no means put an end to her perplexities. She was advised to allow Joseph to follow his bent.

"And if he is not a man of genius," said du Bruel, who was civil to Agathe, "you can always get him a place."

On the landing Madame Descoings, seeing out the three old clerks, called them the "three Sages of Greece."

"She worries herself too much," said du Bruel.

"She may think herself only too lucky that her boy will do anything!" said Claparon.

"If only God preserves the Emperor," said Desroches, "Joseph will be provided for elsewhere. So what has she to be anxious about?"

"She is afraid of everything where her children are concerned," replied Madame Descoings.

"Well, dear little woman," she went on, as she re-entered the room, "you see they are all of one mind. What have you to cry for now?"

"Oh! if it were Philippe, I should have no fears. You do not know what goes on in those studios. They actually have naked women there!"

"But they have a fire, I hope," said Madame Descoings.

A few days later news came of the disastrous rout at Moscow. Napoleon was returning to organize fresh armies and call on France for further sacrifices. Now the poor mother was tortured by very different alarms. Philippe, who did not like college, was positively bent on serving the Emperor. A review at the Tuileries, the last Napoleon ever held, of which Philippe was a spectator, had turned his head. At that period of military display the sight of the uniforms, the authority of an epaulet, had an irresistible fascination for some young men. Philippe believed himself to have the same taste for military service that his brother had for the arts.

Unknown to his mother, he wrote to the Emperor a petition in the following words:

"SIRE—I am the son of your Bridau; I am eighteen years old, and measure nearly six feet; I have stout legs, a good constitution, and I wish to be one of your soldiers. I appeal to your favor to be enrolled in the army," etc.

Within twenty-four hours the Emperor had sent Philippe to the Imperial Military School of Saint-Cyr; and six months later, in November, 1813, he called him out as sub-lieutenant in a cavalry regiment. During part of the winter Philippe remained in dépôt; but as soon as he had learned to ride he set out full of ardor. In the course of the campaign in France, he gained his lieutenancy in a skirmish of the advanced guard, when his headlong valor saved his Colonel. The Emperor made him Captain after the battle of La Fère-Champenoise, and placed him on the staff. Stimulated by this promotion, at Montereau Philippe won the Cross. Then, having witnessed Napoleon's farewell at Fontainebleau, and being driven to fanaticism by the scene, Captain Philippe refused to serve under the Bourbons.

When he went home to his mother in July, 1814, he found her a ruined woman. In the course of the long vacation Joseph's scholarship was cancelled; and Madame Bridau, whose pension had been paid out of the Emperor's privy purse, vainly applied for a clerkship for him in the offices of the Ministry of the Interior. Joseph, more than ever devoted to painting, was enchanted, and only besought his mother to allow him to go to Monsieur Regnauld's studio, promising her that he would make a living. He was, he said, high enough in the second class at school, and could get on without rhetoric.

Philippe, a captain, and wearing an Order at nineteen, after serving under Napoleon on two battlefields, immensely flattered his mother's pride; so, though he was rough, noisy, and in reality devoid of all merit but the vulgar courage of a slashing swordsman, to her he was the man of genius; while Joseph, who was small, sickly, and thin, with a rugged brow, who loved peace and quiet, and dreamed of fame as an artist, was doomed, as she declared, never to give her anything but worry and anxiety. The winter of 1814–15 was a good one for Joseph, who, by the secret interest of Madame Descoings and of Bixiou, a pupil of Gros, was admitted to work in that famous studio, whence proceeded so

many different types of talent, and where he formed a close intimacy with Schinner.

Then came the great 20th of March; Captain Bridau, who joined the Emperor at Lyons and escorted him back to the Tuileries, was promoted to be Major of the Dragoon Guards. After the battle of Waterloo, where he was wounded, but slightly, and won the Cross of a Commander of the Legion of Honor, he next found himself with Maréchal Davoust at Saint-Denis, and not with the army of the Loire; thus, by the interest of Maréchal Davoust, he was allowed to retain his Cross and his rank in the army, but he was put upon half pay. Joseph, uneasy about the future, studied meanwhile with an ardor that made him ill more than once in the midst of the hurricane of public events.

"It is the smell of paint," Agathe would say to Madame Descoings. "He ought to give up work that is so bad for his health."

All Agathe's anxieties were then centred in her son the Lieutenant-Colonel. She saw him again in 1816, fallen from his pay and profits of about nine thousand francs a year as Major in the Emperor's Dragoon Guards, to half pay, amounting to three hundred francs a month; she spent her little savings in furnishing for him the attic over the kitchen.

Philippe was one of the most assiduous Bonapartists that haunted the Café Lemblin, a thorough constitutional Bœotia. There he acquired the habits, manners, and style of living of half-pay officers; nay, he outdid them, as any young man of twenty was sure to do, solemnly vowing a mortal hatred of the Bourbons; he was not to be talked over, and even refused such opportunities as were offered him of employment in the field with his full rank. In his mother's eyes Philippe was showing great strength of character.

"His father could have done no better," said she.

Philippe could live on his half pay. He would cost his mother nothing, while Joseph was entirely dependent on the two widows. From that moment Agathe's preference for Philippe was manifest. Hitherto it had been covert; but

the persecution under which he suffered as a faithful adherent to the Emperor, the memory of the wound her darling son had received, his courage in adversity—which, voluntary as it was, seemed to her noble adversity—brought out Agathe's weakness. The words, "He is unfortunate," justified everything.

Joseph, whose nature overflowed with the childlike simplicity which is superabundant in the youthful artist-soul, and who had been brought up to admire his elder brother, far from resenting his mother's favoritism, vindicated it by sharing in her worship of a "veteran" who had won Napoleon's Orders in two battles—of a man wounded at Waterloo. How could he doubt the superiority of this big brother, whom he had seen in the splendid green-and-gold uniform of the Dragoon Guards, at the head of his squadron on the Champ de Mai. And in spite of her preference, Agathe was a good mother. She loved Joseph, but not blindly; she simply did not understand him. Joseph worshipped his mother, whereas Philippe allowed her to adore him. Still, for her the dragoon moderated his military coarseness, while he never disguised his contempt for Joseph, though expressing it not unkindly. As he looked at his brother's powerful head, too large for a body kept thin by constant work, and still, at the age of seventeen, slight and weakly, he would call him "the brat." His patronizing ways would have been offensive but for the artist's indifference, in the belief, indeed, that a soldier always had a kind heart under his rough manners. The poor boy did not yet know that really first-rate military men are as gentle and polite as other superior persons. Genius is everywhere true to itself.

"Poor child!" Philippe would say to his mother. "Don't tease him; let him amuse himself." And this contempt was in his mother's eyes an evidence of brotherly affection.

"Philippe will always love and protect his brother," she thought.

In 1816 Joseph obtained his mother's permission to convert the loft adjoining his bedroom into a painting-room,

and Madame Descoings gave him a small sum to purchase such things as were indispensable to his "business" as a painter; for in the minds of the two widows painting was but a trade. Joseph, with the energy and zeal that are part of such a vocation, arranged everything in his humble studio with his own hands. The landlord, at Madame Descoings' request, made a skylight in the roof. Thus the attic became a large room, and was painted chocolate color by Joseph; he hung some sketches against the walls; Agathe, not very willingly, had a small cast-iron stove fixed; and Joseph could now work at home, not, however, neglecting Gros' studio or Schinner's.

The Constitutional party, consisting largely of half-pay officers and the Bonapartists, were at that time frequently engaged in riots round the House of Representatives, in the name of the Charter, which no one would hear of, and they plotted sundry conspiracies. Philippe, who must needs get mixed up in them, was arrested, but released for lack of evidence; but the War Minister cut off his half-pay, reducing him to what might be called punishment pay. France was no longer the place for him; Philippe would end by falling into some trap laid by the Government agents. There was at that time a great talk of these *agents provocateurs*. So, while Philippe was playing billiards in cafés suspected of disaffection, losing his time, and getting into a habit of drinking various liqueurs, Agathe lived in mortal terrors for the great man of the family.

The "three Sages of Greece" were too well used to walking the same way every evening, to mounting the stairs to the widows' rooms, and to finding the ladies always expecting them, and anxious to ask them the news of the day, ever to cease their visits; they came regularly to their game in the little green drawing-room. The Ministry of the Interior, thoroughly purged in 1816, had kept Claparon on its lists as one of the trimmers who murmur in an undertone the news from the "Moniteur," adding, "Do not get me into trouble!" Desroches, dismissed soon after his senior du

Bruel, was still fighting for his pension. These three friends, seeing Agathe's despair, advised her to send the Colonel abroad.

"There is much talk of conspiracies, and your son, with his character, will be the victim of some such affair, for there is always some one to peach."

"The Devil!" said du Bruel, in a low voice, and looking about him. "He is the stuff of which his Emperor used to make his marshals, and he ought not to give up his calling. Let him serve in the East, in the Indies—"

"But his health?" objected Agathe.

"Why does not he enter an office?" said Desroches. "So many private concerns are being started. I mean to get a place as head-clerk in an Assurance Company as soon as my pension is settled."

"Philippe is a soldier; he only cares for fighting," said Agathe the warlike.

"Then he should be a good boy, and apply for active service with—"

"This crew?" cried the widow. "Oh, you will never get me to suggest it!"

"You are wrong," replied du Bruel. "My son has just been helped on by the Duc de Navarreins. The Bourbons are very good to all who join them honestly. Your son will be appointed as Lieutenant-Colonel to a regiment."

"They will take none but noblemen in the cavalry, and he will never be full colonel," cried Madame Descoings.

Agathe, in great alarm, implored Philippe to go abroad and offer his services to some foreign power. Any one of them would receive with favor an officer of the Emperor's staff.

"Serve with foreigners?" cried Philippe in horror.

Agathe embraced her son fervently, exclaiming, "He is his father all over."

"He is quite right," said Joseph. "A Frenchman is too proud of his column to lead any foreign columns. Besides, Napoleon may come back again yet."

To please his mother, a splendid idea occurred to Philippe: He might join General Lallemand in the United States, and co-operate in founding the *Champ d'Asile*, one of the most disastrous hoaxes ever perpetrated under the name of a National Fund. Agathe paid ten thousand francs, and went with her son to le Havre to see him on board ship.

At the end of 1817, Agathe was managing to live on the six hundred francs a year left to her in Government securities; then, by a happy inspiration, she invested at once the ten thousand francs that remained to her of her savings, and so had seven hundred francs a year more.

Joseph wished to contribute to her act of sacrifice; he went about dressed like a bum-bailiff, wearing thick shoes and blue socks; he wore no gloves; he burned coal instead of wood; he lived on bread, milk, and cheap cheese. The poor lad never heard a word of encouragement from anybody but old Madame Descoings and from Bixiou, his school-fellow and fellow-student, who was by this time employed in drawing capital little caricatures, besides having a small place in a Government office.

"How glad I was to see the summer of 1818!" Bridau would often say when speaking of these hard times. "The sun saved my buying fuel."

He was already quite as good a colorist as Gros, and only went to his master for advice; he was thinking of riding a tilt at the classic school, of breaking free from Greek conventionality and the leading strings which fettered an art whose birthright is nature as it is, in the omnipotence of its creativeness and its caprice. Joseph was making ready for the struggle which, from the day when he first exhibited at the Salon, was never more to cease.

It was a terrible year for them all. Roguin, the widows' notary, disappeared, taking with him all the money kept back during the past seven years from Madame Descoings' annuity, which by this time ought to have been bringing them in two thousand francs a year. Three days after this catastrophe there came from New York a bill drawn on his

mother by Colonel Philippe. The poor fellow, swindled like so many more, had lost everything in the scheme for the *Champ d'Asile*. This letter, by which Agathe, Madame Descoings, and Joseph all were melted to tears, spoke of debts incurred at New York, where his companions in misfortune had stood surety for him.

"And it was all my doing that he went!" cried the poor mother, ingenious in finding excuses for Philippe's sins.

"I advise you not to send him often on such journeys," said old Madame Descoings to her niece.

Madame Descoings was heroic; she still paid Madame Bridau a thousand crowns; but she also still paid regularly to keep up the three numbers which had never come out since 1799. At this time she began to doubt the honesty of the management. She accused the Government authorities, believing them quite capable of suppressing the issue of the three numbers in the drawing so as to keep up the frenzied deposits of the ticket-holders.

After a brief consideration of ways and means, it seemed impossible to raise a thousand francs without selling some shares. The two women talked of pledging their plate, some of their house-linen, or even part of the furniture that they could do without. Joseph, terrified by these plans, went to call on Gérard, and explained the situation; the great painter obtained a commission for him from the Master of the Royal Household to make two copies of the portrait of Louis XVIII., at the price of five hundred francs each. Though little addicted to liberality, Gros took his pupil to a shop where Joseph got all the necessary materials. But the thousand francs were to be paid only on delivery. Joseph set to work and painted four little pictures in ten days; these he sold to the dealers, and brought his mother a thousand francs; she could meet the bill. A week later, another letter from the Colonel announced to his mother that he was sailing on board a packet, the captain having accepted his promise to pay. Philippe added that he would need at least a thousand francs more on disembarking at le Havre.

"Well," said Joseph to his mother, "I shall have finished the copies; you can take him the thousand francs."

"Dear Joseph!" cried Agathe, embracing him with tears. "Then you really love that poor persecuted boy? He is our glory and all our hope! So young, so brave, and so unfortunate! Everything is against him; let us all three at any rate be on his side."

"Painting is good for something after all, you see," cried Joseph, happy at having at last won his mother's permission to become a great artist.

Madame Bridau flew to meet her beloved son, Colonel Philippe. At le Havre she walked every day to a point beyond the round tower built by Francis I., every day imagining fresh and dreadful alarms as she watched for the American packet. None but mothers know how this kind of torment revives their first motherhood. The vessel came in one fine morning in October, 1819, without damage, without having met the slightest squall.

The air of his native land, and the sight of his mother, must always have some effect, even on the coarsest soul, especially after an exile full of disasters. Philippe gave way to an effusiveness of feeling which made Agathe think to herself, "How much this one loves me!"—Alas! the young officer loved but one creature in the world, and that was Colonel Philippe. His ill-fortune in Texas, his stay in New York—a place where speculation and self-interest are carried to the highest pitch, where the coarsest selfishness becomes cynicism, where each man, living for himself alone, is compelled to tread his own path, where politeness does not exist—in short, the smallest incidents of his expedition had developed in Philippe all the bad tendencies of the disbanded trooper. He was a bully, a drinker, a smoker, assertive and rude; penury and privations had deteriorated him. Also, the Colonel considered himself persecuted; the effect of this belief on a man of low intelligence is to make him an intolerant persecutor. To Philippe the whole uni-

verse began at his head and ended at his feet; the sun shone for him alone. To crown all, his experience of New York, interpreted by a man of action, had robbed him of every moral scruple.

With beings of his stamp there are but two modes of existence: they are believers, or they are unbelievers; they have all the virtues of an honest man, or they are carried away by every pressure of necessity; then they get into a habit of regarding their smallest interests, and every passing wish prompted by passion, as a necessity. On this plan a man may go far.

In appearance, but in appearance only, the Colonel had preserved the blunt, frank, easy-going manner of a soldier. Thus he was a very dangerous man; he seemed as guileless as a child; but having no one to think of but himself, he never did anything without carefully considering what he had best do, much as a wily prosecutor considers every twist and turn of a tricky rogue. Words cost him nothing, and he would give you as many as you chose to believe. If a man should, unluckily, be so rash as to take exception to the explanations by which he would justify the discrepancies between his conduct and his speech, the Colonel, who was a first-rate shot, who could challenge the most skilful swordsman, and who had the cool head of a man to whom life is a matter of indifference, was ready to demand satisfaction for the first sharp word. Pending that, he looked like a man so ready for blows as to make compromise impossible. His tall figure had become burly, his face was tanned during his stay in Texas, and he had caught the abrupt speech and peremptory tone of a man who means to be respected in the midst of the populace of New York.

Such as he was, plainly dressed, and his frame evidently hardened by his recent hard life, Philippe was a hero in his poor mother's eyes; but he had, in fact, become what the common people plainly describe as "a bad lot."

Madame Bridau, startled by her darling son's destitute condition, had a complete outfit made for him at le Havre;

as she listened to the tale of his woes, she had not the heart to check his eating, drinking, and amusing himself, as a man was bound to drink and enjoy himself on his return from the *Champ d'Asile.*

The occupation of Texas by the remnant of the Grand Army was no doubt a splendid idea; but it was the men that were found wanting rather than the conditions, since Texas is now a republican state of great promise. The experiment made under the Restoration proved emphatically that the interests of the Liberals were purely selfish, and in no sense national; aiming at power, and at nothing else. Neither the material, the place, the idea, nor the goodwill was lacking, only the money and the support of that hypocritical party; they had vast sums at their disposal, and would give nothing when the reinstatement of an Empire was at stake.

Housewives of Agathe's stamp have the good sense which enables them to see through such political frauds. The hapless mother saw the truth as she heard her son's story; for, during his absence, her interest in the exile had led her to listen to the pompous announcements of the Constitutional newspapers, and to watch the vicissitudes of the braggart subscription which yielded scarcely a hundred and fifty thousand francs when five or six millions were needed. The leaders of the Liberal party very soon discovered that they were, in fact, doing the job for Louis XVIII. by sending away the glorious remnant of the French army, and they abandoned to their fate the most devoted and ardent enthusiasts, who were the first to go. Agathe never was able to explain to Philippe that he had been the prey of fraud rather than of persecution. In her belief in her idol she accused herself of stupidity, and lamented the disasters of the times which had fallen on Philippe.

And it was true that, until now, in all his misfortunes he had been less a sinner than a victim to his fine temper and energy, to the Emperor's overthrow, to the duplicity of the Liberals and the vindictiveness of the Bourbons toward

the Bonapartists. All through the week they spent at le Havre—a horribly expensive week—she never dared hint that he should become reconciled to the King's Government and call at the War Office; she had enough to do to get him away from le Havre, where living is very dear, and back to Paris, when she had no money left but just enough for the journey. Madame Descoings and Joseph, who met them as they alighted from the coach in the yard of the Messageries Royales, were shocked at the change in Agathe.

"Your mother has grown ten years older in two months," said the old lady to Joseph, in the midst of the embracing, while their two trunks were taken down.

"Well, Granny Descoings, and how are you?" was Philippe's tender greeting to the grocer's widow, whom Joseph affectionately addressed as *Maman Descoings*.

"We have no money to pay for the cab," said Agathe piteously.

"But I have," replied the young painter. "My brother is splendidly burned!" he exclaimed, looking at Philippe.

"Yes, I am colored like a pipe. But you have not altered, little man."

Joseph, now one-and-twenty, and much appreciated by a few friends who had stood by him in evil days, felt his powers, and was conscious of his talent. In a little society of young men devoted to science, letters, politics, and philosophy, he represented painting; he was hurt by his brother's contemptuous tone, emphasized by an incivility; Philippe pulled his ear as if he were a mere child. Agathe observed the sort of chill which came over Madame Descoings and Joseph after their first affectionate warmth, but she set matters right by speaking of the privations endured by Philippe during his exile.

Madame Descoings, anxious to make a high day in honor of the return of the prodigal son, as she called him in her own mind, had prepared the best of dinners, to which she had invited old Claparon and the elder Desroches. All the friends of the family were invited, and came in the evening.

Joseph had asked Léon Giraud, d'Arthez, Michel Chrestien, Fulgence Ridal, and Bianchon, his friends of the coterie. Madame Descoings had told Bixiou—her stepson, as she called him—that the young people would play a game of écarté. The younger Desroches, sternly forced by his father to become a law-student, also joined the party. Du Bruel, Claparon, Desroches, and the Abbé Loraux stared at the traveller, frightened by his coarse face and manners, his voice husky with dram-drinking, his vulgar language and looks. While Joseph was setting out the card-tables, her most intimate friends gathered round Agathe and asked her—"What do you intend to do with Philippe?"

"I do not know," said she. "But he is still determined not to serve under the Bourbons."

"It is very difficult to find him a place in France. If he will not re-enter the army, he will not easily find a pigeon-hole ready for him in the civil service," said old du Bruel. "And only to listen to him is enough to prove that he will never make a fortune, like my son, by writing plays."

Agathe's glance in reply was enough to make them all understand how anxious she was as to Philippe's prospects; and as neither of her friends had any suggestions to offer, they all kept silence. The exile, young Desroches, and Bixiou were playing écarté, a game that was then the rage.

"Maman Descoings, my brother has no money to play with," said Joseph, in the kind and stanch old lady's ear.

The gambler in the lottery went to fetch twenty francs, and gave them to the artist, who quietly slipped them into his brother's hand.

All the guests arrived. Two tables were set for boston, and the party grew lively. Philippe proved but a sorry player. After winning a good deal at first, he lost, till, by eleven o'clock, he owed fifty francs to young Desroches and Bixiou. The noise and disputes over the écarté more than once disturbed the peaceful boston players, and they kept covert watch over Philippe. The Colonel gave evidence of such a bad spirit that, in his last wrangle with young Des-

roches—who was not very good-tempered either—the elder Desroches, though his son was in the right, pronounced against him, and desired him to play no more. Madame Descoings did the same with her grandson, who had begun firing such keen witticisms that Philippe did not understand them; still, they might have led this caustic satirist into danger if by chance one of his barbed arrows had pierced the Colonel's dense intelligence.

"You must be tired," said Agathe to Philippe. "Come to your room."

"Travelling forms the young!" said Bixiou, smiling, when Agathe and the Colonel were out of the room.

Joseph, who rose with the dawn and went early to rest, did not see the evening out. Next morning Agathe and her friend, as they laid breakfast in the front room, could not help thinking that evening company would cost them very dear if Philippe went on playing "that game," as Madame Descoings phrased it. The old woman, now seventy-six years of age, proposed to sell her furniture, to give up her rooms on the second floor to the landlord—who was most willing to have them—to take Agathe's drawing-room for her bedroom, and to use the other room as a sitting- and dining-room in one. In this way they could save seven hundred francs a year. This retrenchment would enable them to allow Philippe fifty francs a month while he was looking out for something to do. Agathe accepted the sacrifice.

When the Colonel came down, after his mother had asked him if he had been comfortable in his little room, the two widows laid the state of affairs before him. Madame Descoings and Agathe, by combining their incomes, had five thousand three hundred francs a year, of which four thousand were Madame Descoings' annuity. The old lady allowed Bixiou six hundred francs a year—for the last six months she had owned him to be her grandson—and six hundred to Joseph; the rest, with Agathe's income, was spent in housekeeping generally. All their savings were gone.

"Be quite easy," said the Colonel; "I will look out for

some appointment. I will cost you nothing. All I want is a crust and a crib for the present."

Agathe kissed her son, and his old friend slipped a hundred francs into his hand to pay the gambling debt of the evening before.

Within ten days the sale of the furniture, the giving up of the rooms, and the necessary changes in Agathe's dwelling were effected with the rapidity to be seen only in Paris. During these ten days Philippe regularly made himself scarce after breakfast, came in to dinner, went out in the evening, and did not come home to bed till midnight.

This was the plan of life into which the soldier fell almost mechanically, and which became a rooted habit: he had his boots blacked on the Pont Neuf for the two sous he would otherwise have spent in crossing by the Pont des Arts to the Palais Royal, where he took two liqueur glasses of brandy while reading the papers, an occupation absorbing him till mid-day; at about noon he made his way by the Rue Vivienne to the Café Minerve, at that time the headquarters of the Liberals, and there he played billiards with some retired fellow officers. There, while he won or lost, Philippe always got through three or four more glasses of various spirits, and then smoked ten *régie* cigars as he wandered and lounged about the streets. In the evening, after smoking a few pipes at the Estaminet Hollandais, he went up to the gambling tables at about ten. The waiter handed him a card and a pin; he consulted certain experienced players as to the state of the run on red or black, and staked ten francs at an opportune moment, never playing more than three times, whether he won or lost. When he had won, as he commonly did, he drank a tumbler of punch and made his way home to his attic; but by this time he would be talking of smashing up the *ultras* and the bodyguard, and sing on the stairs, "Preserve the Empire from its foes."—His poor mother, as she heard him, would say, "Philippe is in good spirits this evening," and she would go up to give him a kiss, never complaining of the reek of punch, spirits, and tobacco.

"You ought to be pleased with me, my dear mother," said he one day toward the end of January. "I am sure I lead the most regular life!"

Philippe had dined out five times with some old comrades. These soldiers had talked over the state of their affairs, and discussed the hopes they founded on the building of a submarine vessel to be employed to deliver the Emperor. Among the fellow-officers he here met again, Philippe was particularly thick with a former captain of the Dragoon Guard named Giroudeau, in whose company he had first smelled gunpowder. This officer of Dragoons was the cause of Philippe's completing what Rabelais calls the devil's outfit, and adding a fourth iniquity to his dram, his cigar, and his gambling.

One evening, at the beginning of February, Giroudeau took Philippe after dinner to the Gaité Theatre, to a box sent to a small theatrical paper belonging to his nephew Finot, for whom the old soldier kept the cash-box and the accounts, addressed and checked the papers. Dressed after the fashion of the Bonapartist officers of the Constitutional opposition, in loose, long coats with a square collar buttoned up to the chin, hanging to their heels, and decorated with the rosette, armed with a loaded cane hanging to the wrist by a plaited leather cord, the two troopers had treated themselves to a skinful, as they expressed it, and opened their hearts to each other as they went into the box. Through the haze of a considerable number of bottles of wine and "nips" of sundry liqueurs, Giroudeau pointed out to Philippe a plump and nimble little damsel on the stage, known as Florentine, whose favors and affections, as well as the box, were his through the all-powerful influence of the paper.

"But, dear me," said Philippe, "how far does she carry her favors for an old dappled-gray trooper like you?"

"Praise the Lord, I have never forgotten the old principles of our glorious uniform!" said Giroudeau. "I never spent two farthings on a woman."

"What next?" cried Philippe, with a finger to his left eye.

"Quite true," said Giroudeau. "But, between ourselves, the paper has something to do with it. To-morrow you will see, in two lines, the management will be advised to give Mademoiselle Florentine a *pas seul.*—On my word, my dear boy, I am very happy," said Giroudeau.

"Well," thought Philippe, "if this venerable Giroudeau, in spite of a skull as bare as your knee, his eight-and-forty years, his corporation, his face like a wine-grower, and his nose like a potato, can be sweetheart to a dancer, I ought to be the man for the first actress in Paris.—Where are such articles to be had?" he asked Giroudeau.

"I will take you this evening to see Florentine's humble home. Though my Dulcinea gets but fifty francs a month from the theatre, thanks to a retired silk mercer named Cardot, who allows her five hundred francs a month, she is not so badly set up."

"Why—what?" said Philippe, jealous.

"Pooh!" said Giroudeau. "True love is blind."

After the play Giroudeau took Philippe to see Mademoiselle Florentine, who lived in the Rue de Crussol, a stone's throw from the theatre.

"We must behave," said Giroudeau; "Florentine has her mother with her. As you may suppose, I cannot afford to allow her one, and the good woman really is her mother. The woman was a doorkeeper, but she does not lack brains, and her name is Cabirolle. Call her Madame; she is particular about that."

Florentine had at her house that evening a friend of hers, a certain Marie Godeschal, as lovely as an angel, as cold as a ballet-dancer, and a pupil of Vestris, who promised her the highest Terpsichorean distinctions. Mademoiselle Godeschal, who was anxious to come out at the Panorama-dramatique, under the name of Mariette, counted on the patronage of a First Groom of the Chambers, to whom Vestris had long promised to present her. Vestris, as yet still in full vigor,

did not think his pupil sufficiently advanced. Marie Godeschal was ambitious, and she made her assumed name of Mariette famous; but her ambition was praiseworthy. She had a brother, a clerk in Derville the lawyer's office. Orphans and poor, but loving each other truly, the brother and sister had seen life as it is in Paris; he wished to become an attorney so as to provide for his sister; she determined in cold blood to be a dancer, and to avail herself of her beauty as well as of her nimble legs to buy a connection for her brother. Apart from their affection for each other, from their interests and their life together, everything else was to them, as to the ancient Romans and the Hebrews, barbarian, foreign, and inimical. This beautiful affection, which nothing could ever change, explained Mariette's life to those who knew her well.

The brother and sister lived at this time on the eighth floor of a house in the Vieille Rue du Temple. Mariette had begun learning at the age of ten, and had now seen sixteen summers. Alas! for lack of a little dress her dainty beauty, hidden under an Angola shawl, perched on iron pattens, dressed in cotton print, and only moderately neat, could never be suspected by any one but the Paris lounger in pursuit of *grisettes* and on the track of beauty under a cloud.

Philippe fell in love with Mariette. What Mariette found in Philippe was an officer of the Dragoon Guards and of the Emperor's staff, a young man of seven-and-twenty, and the delight of proving herself superior to Florentine by the evident superiority of Philippe to Giroudeau. Both Florentine and Giroudeau—he to give his comrade pleasure, and she to procure a protector for her friend—urged Mariette and Philippe to a "water-color marriage." The Parisian expression *à la détrempe* is equivalent to the words "morganatic marriage" applied to kings and queens.

Philippe, as they went out, explained to Giroudeau how poor he was.

"I will mention you to my nephew Finot," said Giroudeau. "Look here, Philippe, this is the day of black coats and fine words; we must knock under. The inkstand is all

powerful now. Ink takes the place of gunpowder, and words are used instead of shot. After all, these little vermin of editors are very ingenious, and not bad fellows. Come to see me to-morrow at the office; by that time I will have spoken two words about you to my nephew. Before long you will have something to do on some newspaper. Mariette, who will have you now because she has nothing else—make no mistake on that point—no engagement, no hope of coming out, and whom I told that, like me, you were going in for journalism—Mariette will prove that she loves you for yourself, and you will believe her! Do as I do; keep her from rising as long as you can. I was so desperately in love that as soon as Florentine wanted to dance a *pas seul*, I begged Finot to write her up; but says my nephew to me, 'She is clever, is she not? Well, the day she first dances a step of her own she will show you across the doorstep.' That's Finot all over. Oh, you'll find him a wide-awake chap."

Next day, at about four o'clock, Philippe made his way to the Rue du Sentier, and up to a small room on the entresol, where he found Giroudeau shut up like a wild beast in a sort of hen-coop with a wicket; it contained a little stove, a little table, two little chairs, and some little billets for the fire. The whole apparatus was dignified by these magical words, *Office for Subscribers*, painted on the outside door in black letters, and the word *Cashier* in running hand on a board hung on the bars of the cage. Along the wall opposite the old trooper's coop was a bench, on which an old soldier was eating a snack; he had lost an arm, and Giroudeau addressed him as Coloquinte (Colocynth), by reason, no doubt, of the Egyptian hue of his face.

"Sweetly pretty!" said Philippe, looking about him. "What business have you here—you who rode in poor Colonel Chabert's charge at Eylau? In the devil's name! In all the devils' names! A superior officer . . ."

"Why, yes! Roo-ty too-too! A superior officer signing receipts in a newspaper office," said Giroudeau, settling his black silk skull-cap. "And what is more, I am the respon-

sible editor of that rodomontade," and he pointed to the paper.

"And I, who once went to Egypt, now go to the Stamp Office," said the pensioner.

"Silence, Coloquinte," said Giroudeau. "You are in the presence of a brave man who carried the Emperor's orders at the battle of Montmirail!"

"Pre-sent arms!" cried Coloquinte. "I lost my missing arm there."

"Coloquinte, mind the shop; I am going upstairs to my nephew."

The two soldiers went up to the fourth floor, to an attic at the end of a passage, and found a young man with cold, colorless eyes stretched on a shabby sofa. The civilian did not disturb himself, though he offered cigars to his uncle and his uncle's friend.

"My dear fellow," said Giroudeau, in a meek and gentle voice, "here is the valiant Major of whom I spoke."

"What then?" said Finot, looking Philippe from head to foot, while the officer lost all his spirit, like Giroudeau, in the presence of the diplomat of the press.

"My dear boy," said Giroudeau, trying to play the uncle, "the Colonel has just come from Texas."

"Oh! you were caught for Texas and the Champ d'Asile? You were very young, too, to turn soldier-plowman."

The sting of this witticism can be appreciated only by those who can remember the flood of prints, screens, clocks, bronzes, and casts to which the idea of the soldier-plowman gave rise, as a great allegory of the fate of Napoleon and his veterans, which at last found vent in various satirical songs. The idea was worth a million at least; you may still see the soldier-plowman on wall-papers in the depths of the provinces.

If this young man had not been Giroudeau's nephew, Philippe would have smacked his cheeks.

"Yes, I was caught for it; and I lost twelve thousand francs and my time," replied he, trying to force a smile.

"And you still love the Emperor?"

"He is my God!" replied Philippe Bridau.

"You are a Liberal?"

"I shall always side with the Constitutional Opposition. Oh, Foy! Manuel! Laffitte! There are men for you. They will rid us of these wretches who have sneaked in at the heels of the foreigners."

"Well, then," said Finot coldly, "you must take the benefit of your misfortunes, for you are a victim to the Liberals, my good fellow. Remain a Liberal if you are set on your opinions; but threaten the Liberals with divulging the madness of the Texas scheme. You never got a farthing of the national subscription, I suppose? Well, then, you are in a splendid position: ask for the accounts of the fund. This is what will happen: A fresh newspaper is now being started by the Opposition under the auspices of the deputies of the Left; you will be made cashier with a thousand crowns a year, a place for life. You have only to find twenty thousand francs as security; get them, and in a week you will have a berth. I will advise them to silence you by making them offer you the place—but cry out, and cry loud!"

Giroudeau allowed Philippe to go down a few steps before him, pouring out thanks as he went, and said to his nephew: "Well, you're a pretty fellow, you are! You let me hang on here with twelve hundred francs a year—"

"The paper will not live a year," replied Finot. "I have something better for you."

"By Heaven!" said Philippe to Giroudeau, "that nephew of yours is no fool. I had never thought of taking the benefit of my position, as he puts it."

That evening, at the Café Lemblin and the Café Minerve, Colonel Philippe broke out in abuse of the Liberals who sent a man to Texas, who talked gammon about the soldier-plowman, who left brave men to starve in misery after squeezing twenty thousand francs out of them, and driving them for two years from pillar to post.

"I mean to ask for an account of the money subscribed

r the Champ d'Asile," he said to one of the regular cus-mers at the Café Minerve, who repeated it to the journalists the Left.

Philippe did not go home to the Rue Mazarine; he went tell Mariette that he was about to be employed on a paper ith ten thousand subscribers, in which her Terpsichorean nbitions should be ardently supported. Agathe and Ma-me Descoings sat up for him in an agony of terror, for the uc de Berry had that moment been assassinated.

The Colonel walked in next day, a few minutes after eakfast. When his mother expressed her uneasiness at s absence, he flew into a passion, and asked if he were age or no.

"By Heaven! I come in with good news, and you all look solemn as hearses. The Duc de Berry is dead! Well, so uch the better! There is one less of them.—I am going to cashier in a newspaper office, with a thousand crowns a ear, so you are free from all worry so far as I am concerned."

"Is it possible?" cried Agathe.

"Yes, if you can stand surety for twenty thousand francs. ou have only to deposit your securities for thirteen hundred ancs a year, and you will draw your half-yearly dividends l the same."

The two widows, who for two months past had been kill-g themselves with wondering what Philippe was doing, and ow to find him employment, were so delighted at his pros-ects that they thought no more of the various difficulties of e hour. In the evening old du Bruel, Claparon, who was dying man, and the inflexible Desroches senior—the three ages of Greece—were unanimous. They advised the widow stand surety for her son. The paper having been started, ost fortunately, before the murder of the Duc de Berry, caped the blow struck at the press by M. Decaze. The idow Bridau's State securities for thirteen hundred francs dividends were deposited as a pledge for Philippe, and was appointed cashier. This good son then promised to ay the widows a hundred francs a month for his board and

lodging, and was regarded as the best of good boys. Those who had thought ill of him congratulated Agathe.

"We judged him wrongly," they said.

Poor Joseph, not to be left in the lurch, tried to keep himself, and succeeded.

At the end of three months, the Colonel—who ate and drank for four, who was very particular, and, under the pretext of his paying, led the two widows into expensive living—had not contributed a farthing. Neither his mother nor Madame Descoings would remind him of his promise, out of delicate feeling. The year went by, and not one of the crown pieces, which Leon Gozlan picturesquely calls a tiger with five claws, had passed from Philippe's pocket to the housekeeping. On this point, to be sure, the Colonel had silenced his scruples of conscience: he rarely dined at home.

"And, after all, he is happy," said his mother. "He is easy, he has an appointment."

Through the influence of the theatrical articles, written by Vernon, a friend of Bixiou's, of Finot's, and Giroudeau's, Mariette came out; not indeed at the Panorama-dramatique, but at the Porte Saint-Martin, where she was a success even by the side of Bégrand. Among the directors of that theatre there was just then a wealthy and luxurious general, who, being in love with an actress, had become an impresario for her sake. There are always in Paris men in love with some actress, dancer, or singer, who make themselves theatrical managers for love's sake. This general knew Philippe and Giroudeau. By the help of the two newspapers, Finot's and Philippe's, Mariette's début was arranged by the three officers, with all the greater ease because, as it would seem, such passions are always reciprocally helpful in matters of folly.

Bixiou, ever mischievous, had soon told his grandmother and the pious Agathe that Philippe the cashier, the bravest of the brave, was the lover of Mariette, the famous dancer at the Porte Saint-Martin. The stale news fell like a thunderclap on the two widows. In the first place, Agathe's relig-

ious sentiments made her look on the women of the stage as brands of hell, and then they both believed that such women ate gold, drank pearls, and devoured the finest fortunes.

"Why!" said Joseph to his mother, "do you suppose that Philippe would be such a fool as to give any money to Mariette? Such women only ruin rich men."

"There is a talk already of securing Mariette at the Opera House," said Bixiou. "But don't be alarmed, Madame Bridau; the corps diplomatique haunts the Porte Saint-Martin, and that handsome girl will soon throw over your son. They say there is an ambassador who is desperately in love with Mariette.—There is some other news. Old Claparon is dead, and is to be buried to-morrow; and his son, who is a banker, and rolling in gold and silver, has ordered a third-class funeral. The fellow has no breeding. Such a thing could not happen in China!"

Philippe, with an eye to profit, proposed to marry the dancer; but being on the eve of an engagement at the Opera, Mademoiselle Godeschal refused him, either because she guessed the Colonel's motive, or because she understood that independence was necessary to her fortunes.

Throughout the remainder of this year Philippe came to see his mother twice a month at most. Where was he? At his office, at the theatre, or with Mariette. No light was shed on his proceedings in the home in the Rue Mazarine.

Giroudeau, Finot, Bixiou, Vernon, and Lousteau saw him leading a life of pleasure. Philippe was at every party given by Tullia, one of the first singers at the Opera; by Florentine, who took Mariette's place at the Porte Saint-Martin; by Florine and Matifat, Coralie and Camusot. From four o'clock, when he left his office, he amused himself till midnight; for there was always some ploy arranged the day before, a good dinner given by somebody, an evening at cards, or a supper-party. Philippe lived in his element.

But this carnival, which lasted for eighteen months, was not devoid of cares. The fair Mariette, on her début at the Opera, in January, 1821, subjugated one of the most brilliant

dukes of Louis XVIII.'s court. Philippe tried to hold his own against the duke; but, notwithstanding some luck at the gaming-table, as the month of April came round his passion compelled him to borrow from the cash-box of the newspaper. In the month of May he owed eleven thousand francs. In the course of that fatal month Mariette went to London, to make what she might out of the milords, while the temporary Opera House was being built in the Rue Le Pelletier. Philippe the ill-starred still loved Mariette in spite of her flagrant infidelities—such things happen; she, on her part, had never seen anything in him but a rough and brainless soldier, the first rung of the ladder, on which she did not mean to stay long. Also, as she had foreseen the day when Philippe would have no more money, the dancer had been clever enough to secure supporters among journalists, which made it unnecessary for her to cling to Philippe; still, she felt the gratitude peculiar to women of her stamp to the man who had been the first to level the obstacles in the dreadful career of an actress.

Philippe, thus obliged to let his terrible mistress go to London without being able to follow her, returned to his winter quarters, to use his own expression, and came home to his attic in the Rue Mazarine; there he made many gloomy reflections as he went to bed and got up again. He felt it impossible to live otherwise than as he had been living for this year past. The luxury of Mariette's life, the dinners and suppers, the evenings spent behind the scenes, the high spirits of wits and journalists, the turmoil he had lived in, and all the flattering effect on his senses and on his vanity —this existence, which is to be found only in Paris, and which offers some new sensation every day, had become more than a habit to Philippe; it was a necessity, like tobacco and drams. Indeed, he plainly perceived that he could not live without this constant enjoyment.

The idea of suicide passed through his mind, not on account of the deficit which would be discovered in his balance, but by reason of the impossibility of being with Mari-

ette and living in the atmosphere of pleasures in which he had wallowed for the last twelvemonth. Full of these gloomy notions, he made his appearance, for the first time, in his brother's studio, and found Joseph at work, in a blue blouse, copying a picture for a dealer.

"So that is the way pictures are made?" said Philippe as an opening.

"No," said Joseph, "but that is the way they are copied."

"How much do you get for that?"

"Oh, never enough. Two hundred and fifty francs; but I study the master's method; I learn by it, I find out the secrets of the trade.—There is one of my pictures," he went on, pointing with the handle of his brush to a sketch of which the paint was still wet.

"And how much a year do you pocket now?"

"Unfortunately, I am as yet unknown excepting to the painters. Schinner is giving me a helping hand; he is to get me some work at the Chateau de Presles, where I am going in October to paint some arabesques and borders and ornaments for the Comte de Sérizy, who pays very well. With pot-boilers like this, dealers' orders, I may make eighteen hundred to two thousand francs before long, all clear profit. But I shall send that picture in to the next exhibition; if it is liked, I am a made man. My friends think well of it."

"I am no judge," said Philippe in a quiet tone, which made Joseph look up at him.

"What is the matter?" he asked, seeing his brother look pale.

"I want to know how long it would take you to paint my portrait."

"Well, if I worked at nothing else, and the light were good, I could do it in three or four days."

"That is too long. I can only give you a day. My poor mother is so fond of me that I should wish to leave her my likeness. But say no more about it."

"Why, are you going away again?"

"Going, never to return," said Philippe with affected cheerfulness.

"Come, Philippe, my dear fellow, what ails you? If it is anything serious, I am a man, and I am not a simpleton. I am preparing for a hard struggle, and if discretion is needed I can hold my tongue."

"Can I rely upon it?"

"On my honor."

"You will never say a word to any living being?"

"Never."

"Well, then, I am going to blow my brains out."

"What, are you going to fight a duel?"

"I am going to kill myself."

"Why?"

"I have taken eleven thousand francs out of the cash-box, and I must give in my accounts to-morrow; my deposit money will be diminished by half; my poor mother will be reduced to six hundred francs a year. That, after all, is nothing; I might be able later to give her back a fortune. But I am disgraced; I will not live disgraced."

"You will not be disgraced if you pay; but you will lose your place; you will have nothing left but the five hundred francs pension attached to your Cross. Still, you can live on five hundred francs."

"Good-by," cried Philippe, who hurried downstairs, and would not listen.

Joseph left his work, and went down to join his mother at breakfast; but Philippe's confession had spoiled his appetite. He took Madame Descoings aside, and told her the dreadful news. The old woman gave a loud cry of dismay, dropped a pipkin full of milk that she had in her hand, and sank on to a chair. Agathe hurried in. With one exclamation and another, the fatal facts were told to the mother.

"He? To fail in honesty! Bridau's son has taken money that was intrusted to his keeping!"

The widow was trembling in every limb; her eyes seemed

to grow larger in a fixed stare; she sat down, and burst into tears.

"Where is he?" she cried between her sobs. "Perhaps he has thrown himself into the Seine!"

"You must not despair," said Madame Descoings, "because the poor boy has come in the way of a bad woman, and she made a fool of him. Dear me; that often happens! Until he came home Philippe had been so constantly unlucky, he had so few chances of being happy and loved, that we need not wonder at his passion for this creature. All passions lead to excess. I have something of the kind in my life for which I blame myself, and yet I think myself an honest woman. One fault does not constitute a vice! Besides, after all, only those who do nothing at all never make any mistakes."

Agathe was so overwhelmed by despair that the old lady and Joseph were obliged to make light of Philippe's crime by telling her that such things occur in every family.

"But he is eight-and-twenty," cried Agathe; "he is no longer a child!" a cry of anguish betraying what the poor woman thought of her son's conduct.

"I assure you, mother, that he thinks of nothing but your grief and the wrong he has done," said Joseph.

"Oh, great God! Bring him back. Only let him live, and I will forgive him all!" cried the poor mother, who in fancy beheld a horrible picture of Philippe dragged dead out of the river.

For some minutes awful silence reigned. The day was spent in dreadful suspense. All three flew to the sitting-room window at the least noise, and gave themselves up to endless conjectures.

While his family were in this despair, Philippe was calmly setting everything in order in his office. He had the impudence to hand in his accounts, saying that, for fear of mischance, he had kept eleven thousand francs at his lodgings. The rascal left at four o'clock, taking five hundred francs more from the cash-box, and coolly went up to

the gambling tables, where he had not been seen since his appointment, for he had at least understood that a cashier must not frequent a gambling hell. His subsequent conduct will show that he resembled his grandfather Rouget rather than his admirable father. He might perhaps have made a good general; but in private life he was one of those deep-dyed scoundrels who shelter their audacity and their evil deeds behind the screen of strict legality, and under the reticence of the family roof.

Philippe was perfectly calm during this critical venture. At first he won, and picked up as much as six thousand francs; but he let himself be dazzled by the hope of ending his anxieties at one stroke. He left the game of trente-et-quarante on hearing that at the roulette table there had been a run of sixteen on the black; he staked five thousand francs on the red, and black turned up again for the seventeenth time. The Colonel then staked his remaining thousand francs on the black, and won. Notwithstanding this astonishing intuition of the chances, his head was not clear; he felt this, and yet he would go on; but the spirit of divination which guides players, enlightening them by flashes, was already exhausted. It was now intermittent—the gamester's ruin. Intuition, like the rays of the sun, acts only in an inflexibly straight line; it can guess right only on condition of never diverting its gaze; the freaks of chance disturb it. Philippe lost everything. After so severe an ordeal the most reckless spirit or the boldest must collapse.

As he went home Philippe thought the less of his promise to kill himself, because he had never really meant it. He had forgotten his lost appointment, his impaired deposit money, his mother, and Mariette—the cause of his ruin: he walked on mechanically. When he went in, his mother, bathed in tears, Madame Descoings, and Joseph threw their arms round his neck, hugged him, and led him with rejoicing to a seat by the fire.

"Good!" thought he; "the announcement has had its effect."

The wretch put on an appropriately dolorous face, with all the more ease because his evening's play had considerably upset him. On seeing her atrocious Benjamin pale and dejected, his mother knelt down by him, kissing his hands, pressing them to her heart, and looking long in his face with her eyes full of tears.

"Philippe," she said in a choked voice, "promise not to kill yourself; we will forget everything."

Philippe looked at his unnerved brother, at Madame Descoings with a tear in her eye, and he said to himself, "They are good souls!" Then he lifted up his mother, seated her on his knee, clasped her to his heart, and whispered as he kissed her, "You have given me new life!"

Madame Descoings contrived to produce a very good dinner, adding a couple of bottles of old wine and a little West Indian liqueur, a treasure remaining from her former stock-in-trade.

"Agathe, we must let him smoke his cigars," said she at dessert. And she handed Philippe some cigars.

The two poor souls believed that by giving this fellow every comfort he would learn to love his home and stay there, and they tried to accustom themselves to tobacco smoke, which they abominated. This immense sacrifice was not even suspected by Philippe.

Next day Agathe had aged by ten years. Her alarms once relieved, reflection followed, and the poor woman had not closed an eye throughout that dreadful night. She was now reduced to an income of six hundred francs. Madame Descoings, like all fat women who love good eating, had an obstinate catarrh and cough, and was growing heavy; her step on the stairs sounded like a pavior's hammer, she might die at a moment's notice, and four thousand francs would perish with her. Was it not preposterous to count on that source of supply? What was to be done? What would become of her? Agathe, resolved to be a sick-nurse rather than to be a burden on her children, was not thinking of her-

self. But what would Philippe do, reduced to his five hundred francs of pension attached to the Cross of the Legion of Honor?

By contributing a thousand crowns a year for the last eleven years, Madame Descoings had more than twice repaid her debt, and she was still sacrificing her grandson's interests to those of the Bridau family. Agathe, though all her strict and honest sentiments were outraged, in the midst of this dire disaster still could ask herself as she thought of her son, "Poor boy, could he help it? He is faithful to his oath as a soldier. It is my fault for not getting him married. If I had found him a wife, he would not have formed a connection with this dancer. He has such a strong nature!" . . .

The old tradeswoman, too, had reflected during the night as to the means of saving the honor of the family. At daybreak she got out of bed, and crept to her friend's room.

"It is not your part, nor Philippe's, to manage this delicate matter," said she. "Though our two old friends, Claparon and du Bruel, are dead, we still have old Monsieur Desroches, who has good judgment, and I will go to him this morning. Desroches must report that Philippe has been the victim of his confidence in a friend, and that his weakness in such cases quite unfits him for the post of cashier. What has happened once may happen again: Philippe prefers to retire, thus he will not be dismissed."

Agathe, seeing in this official lie a cloak for Philippe's honor, at any rate in the eyes of strangers, embraced the old lady, who went out to settle the dreadful business. Philippe had slept the sleep of the just.

"She is a sharp one!" said he with a smile, when Agathe explained to her son why breakfast was late.

Old Desroches, the last friend left to these two poor women, still remembered, in spite of his hard nature, that it was Bridau who had given him his place, and he executed the delicate task proposed to him with the skill of an accomplished diplomat. He came to dine with the family, and to

remind Agathe that she must go on the morrow to the Treasury in the Rue Vivienne to sign the transfer of the securities to be sold, and take out the coupons for six hundred francs, her remaining dividends. The old man did not leave this hapless household till he had obtained Philippe's signature to a petition to the Minister of War begging to be reinstated in active service. Desroches pledged his word to the two women that he would forward the petition through the departments of the War Office, and take advantage of the Duke's triumph over Philippe with the dancer to secure that great man's interest.

"Within three months he will be lieutenant-colonel in the Duc de Maufrigneuse's regiment, and you will be rid of him."

Desroches went home loaded with blessings by the two women and Joseph.

As to the newspaper, as Finot had prophesied, two months later it had ceased to appear. Thus, to the world, Philippe's defalcation had no results. But Agathe's motherly feeling had been deeply wounded. Her belief in her son once shaken, she lived in perpetual terrors, mitigated by satisfaction when she found that her sinister anticipations were unfounded.

When men like Philippe, gifted with personal courage, but moral cowards and sneaks, see the course of affairs around them following its usual channel after a plunge in which their moral status has almost perished, this acceptance of the situation by their family or friends is an encouragement. They are sure of impunity; their perverted minds, their gratified passions, lead them to consider how they succeeded in evading the social law, and they become atrociously clever. Thus, a fortnight after, Philippe, once more an idle man and a lounger, inevitably returned to the life of cafés, to his sittings relieved by drams, his long games of billiards with punch, his nightly visit to the gaming-tables, where he risked a small stake at a lucky moment, and pocketed such little winnings as sufficed to pay for his dissipations. He

made a display of economy to deceive his mother and her friend, wore an almost filthy hat, hairless at the edges of the crown and brim, patched boots, a threadbare greatcoat, on which the red rosette scarcely showed, so darkened was it by long wear and soiled with splashes of spirits or of coffee. His greenish buckskin gloves lasted a long time, and he never cast off his satin stock till it looked like tow.

Mariette was this man's only love, and the dancer's faithlessness did much to harden his heart. Now and then when he won more than he expected, or if he were supping with his friend Giroudeau, Philippe would court a Venus of the street, out of a sort of brutal scorn for all her sex. Still, he kept regular hours, breakfasted and dined at home, and came in every night at about one. Three months of this wretched life restored Agathe to some little confidence.

As for Joseph, who was at work on the splendid picture to which he owed his reputation, he lived in his studio. On the word of her grandson, who firmly believed in Joseph's triumph, Madame Descoings lavished maternal care on the painter; she carried up his breakfast in the morning, ran his errands, blacked his boots. The artist never appeared till dinner-time, and gave his evenings to his friends of the Artistic Society. He also read a great deal; he was giving himself the thorough and serious education which a man gets only from himself, and which every man of talent does, in fact, give himself between the ages of twenty and thirty. Agathe, seeing so little of Joseph, and feeling no uneasiness about him, lived in Philippe only, since he alone gave her those alternations of rising fears and terrors allayed which are, to a certain extent, the very life of feeling, and as necessary to motherhood as love is.

Desroches, who came about once a week to call on the widow of his old friend and chief, could give her hopes: the Duc de Maufrigneuse had applied for Philippe to be appointed to his regiment, the War Minister had asked for a report; and as the name of Bridau was not to be found

on any police-list or in any criminal trial, in the early part of the year Philippe would get his papers and orders to join. To succeed in this matter, Desroches had stirred up all his acquaintances; his inquiries at the head-office of the police led to his hearing that Philippe was to be seen every night in the gaming-houses; and he thought it wise to communicate the secret to Madame Descoings, but to her alone, begging her to keep an eye on the future lieutenant-colonel, to whom any scandal might be ruin; for the moment, the War Minister would not be likely to ask whether Philippe were a gambler. And once enrolled under the regimental flag, the officer would give up a passion that was the result of want of occupation.

Agathe, who now had no company in the evening, read her prayers by the fire; while Madame Descoings read her fortune by the cards, interpreting her dreams, and applying the rules of the "Cabala" to her stakes. The lighthearted and obstinate old woman never missed a drawing of lottery-tickets; she still staked on the same three numbers which had never yet been drawn. This set of numbers was now nearly twenty-one years old—it would soon be of age. Its holder based high hopes on this trivial fact. One of the numbers had never come out at any drawing of either of the wheels ever since the lottery was founded, so she staked heavily on this number, and on every combination of the three figures. The bottom mattress of her bed was the hiding-place for the poor old creature's savings; she unsewed it, pushed in the gold piece she had saved on her necessities, neatly wrapped in wool, and sewed it up again. She was resolved, at the last Paris drawing, to risk all her savings on the combinations of her cherished three numbers.

This passion, universally condemned, has never been duly studied. No one has understood this opium to poverty. Did not the lottery, the most puissant fairy in the world, give rise to magical hopes? The turn at roulette, which gives the player a vision of limitless gold and enjoyments, only lasted as long as a lightning flash; while the lottery gave five days

of life to that glorious gleam. What social power can, in these days, make you happy for five days, and bestow on you in fancy all the delights of civilized life—for forty sous? Tobacco, a mania a thousand times more mischievous than gambling, destroys the body, undermines the intellect, stupefies the nation; the lottery caused no misfortunes of that kind. The passion was compelled to moderation by the interval between the drawings, and by the particular wheel the ticket-holder might affect. Madame Descoings never staked on any but the Paris wheel. In the hope of seeing the three numbers drawn which she had kept in hand for twenty years, she had subjected herself to the greatest privations to enable her to stake freely on the last drawing of the year.

When she had cabalistic dreams—for all her dreams did not bear on the numbers of the lottery—she would go and tell them to Joseph; he was the only being who would listen to her, not merely without scolding her, but saying the kindly words by which artists can soothe a monomania. All really great minds respect and sympathize with genuine passions; they understand them, finding their root in the heart or the brain. As Joseph saw things, his brother loved tobacco and spirits, his old Maman Descoings loved lottery-tickets, his mother loved God, young Desroches loved lawsuits, old Desroches loved fly-fishing; every one, said he, loves something. What he loved was ideal beauty in all things; he loved Byron's poetry, Géricault's painting, Rossini's music, Walter Scott's romances.

"Every man to his taste, Maman," he would say, "but your three-pounder hangs fire."

"It will not miss. You shall be a rich man, and my little Bixiou as well!"

"Give it all to your grandson," cried Joseph. "After all, do you as you please."

"Oh, if it comes out, I shall have enough for everybody. To begin with, you shall have a fine studio; you shall not have to give up going to the Opera in order to pay your

models and colorman.—Do you know, child," she went on, "that you have not given me a very creditable part in that picture of yours?"

Joseph, from motives of economy, had used Madame Descoings as the model for a head in his splendid painting of a young courtesan introduced by an old woman to a Venetian senator. This work, a masterpiece of modern art, mistaken for a Titian by Gros himself, prepared the younger painters to recognize and proclaim Joseph's superiority in the Salon of 1823.

"Those who know you, know well what you are," said he gayly, "and why should you care about those who do not know you?"

In the last ten years the old woman's face had acquired the mellow tone of an Easter pippin. Her wrinkles had become set in the full flesh that had grown cold and pulpy. Her eyes, full of sparkle still, seemed animated by a youthful and eager thought, which might the more easily be regarded as one of greed, because there is always some little greed in a gambler. Her plump features betrayed deep dissimulation, and a dominant idea buried far down in her heart. Her passion required secretiveness. The movement of her lips gave a hint of gluttony. Thus, though she was in fact the worthy and kind-hearted woman we have seen, the eye might be mistaken in her. She was a perfect model for the old woman Joseph wished to represent.

Coralie, a young actress of exquisite beauty, who died in the bloom of her youth, the mistress of a friend of Bridau's, Lucien de Rubempré, a young poet, had given him the idea of this subject. This fine work was sometimes called an imitation, but it was a splendid scene as a setting for three portraits. Michel Chrestien, a youthful member of the Artistic Society, had lent his Republican countenance as a model for the senator, and Joseph gave it some touches of maturity, as he slightly exaggerated the expression of Madame Descoings' face.

This great picture, which was to become so famous, and

to give rise to so much animosity, jealousy, and admiration, was only begun; Joseph, compelled to suspend his work on it, and to execute commissions for a living, was busy copying pictures by the old masters, thus studying all their methods; no painter handles his brush more learnedly. His good sense as an artist had counselled him to conceal from Madame Descoings and from his mother the amount of money he was beginning to make, seeing that each had a road to ruin—one in Philippe, and the other in the lottery. The peculiar coolness shown by the soldier in his downfall, the way in which he had counted on his pretended purpose of suicide—which Joseph had seen through—the mistakes he had made in the career he ought never to have abandoned, in short, the smallest details of his conduct, had at last opened Joseph's eyes.

Such insight is rarely lacking in painters. Occupied day after day in the silence of the studio, in work which leaves the mind, to a certain extent, free, they grow in some sort womanly; their thoughts wander round the small facts of life, and detect their covert meaning.

Joseph had bought a fine old cabinet—they were yet the fashion—to decorate a corner of his studio, where the light played on the panels in relief, and gave lustre to a masterpiece of some sixteenth-century craftsman. Inside it he found a secret drawer, where he hoarded a small sum in case of need. With the easy trustfulness of an artist, he was accustomed to keep the cash he allowed himself for pocket-money in a skull that lay on one of the divisions of this cabinet; but, since his brother's return, he found a constant discrepancy between the sums he spent and the balance left. The hundred francs a month melted with extraordinary rapidity. On finding nothing when he had spent but forty or fifty francs, the first time he said to himself, "My money has gone travelling post, it would seem!" The next time he carefully noted his expenses; but in vain did he count, like Robert Macaire, "Sixteen and five make twenty-three," it would not come right.

On finding it a third time still more seriously wrong, he

mentioned the painful subject to his Maman Descoings, who loved him, as he felt, with that maternal affection, tender, trusting, credulous, and enthusiastic, which his mother did not feel, however kind she might be, and which is as needful to an artist at the opening of his career as a hen's care is to her chicks till they are fledged. To her only could he confide his horrible suspicions. He was as sure of his friends as of himself; Madame Descoings would certainly never take anything to risk in the lottery; and the poor soul wrung her hands at the thought as he said, "Only Philippe could commit this petty household theft."

"Why does not he ask me for what he wants?" exclaimed Joseph, mixing the paints on his palette in utter confusion of colors, without heeding what he was doing. "Should I refuse to give him money?"

"But it is robbing an infant!" cried the old woman, with horror expressed in her face.

"No," replied Joseph, "he can have it; he is my brother; my purse is his; but he ought to ask me."

"Place a fixed sum of money there this morning and don't touch it," said Madame Descoings; "I shall know who comes to the studio, and if nobody comes in but Philippe you will know for certain."

Thus, by next day, Joseph had proof of the forced loans levied on him by his brother. Philippe came up to the studio in his brother's absence and took the little cash he needed. The artist feared for his little hoard.

"Wait a bit, wait a bit, I will catch you out, my fine rascal!" said he to Madame Descoings with a laugh.

"Quite right; we ought to punish him, for I have found a deficit occasionally in my own purse. But, poor boy, he must have his tobacco; he has made a habit of it."

"Poor boy! and poor boy indeed!" retorted the artist. "I am beginning to agree with Fulgence and Bixiou—Philippe is always dragging at us. First he gets mixed up in a riot, and has to be sent to America, and that costs my mother twelve thousand francs; then he has not the wit to find any-

thing in the wilds of the New World, and it costs just as much to get him home again; under the pretext of having repeated two words from Napoleon to a general, he believes himself a great soldier, and bound to sulk with the Bourbons; meanwhile he can travel, and amuse himself, and see the world! I am not to be caught with such bird-lime as the story of his woes; he does not look like a man who has not made himself comfortable wherever he was!

"Then my fine fellow has a capital place found for him; he lives like Sardanapalus with an opera girl, robs the till of a newspaper, and costs his mother another twelve thousand francs. Certainly, so far as I am concerned, what need I care? But Philippe will bring the poor mother to want. He treats me like the dirt under his feet because I never was in the Dragoon Guards! And it will be my part, perhaps, to maintain that poor dear mother in her old age, while, if he goes on as he has begun, the retired officer will end I don't know where.

"Bixiou said to me, 'Your brother is a nice rogue!' Well, your grandson is right; Philippe will play some reckless trick yet that will compromise the honor of the family, and then there will be ten or twelve thousand francs more to pay! He gambles every evening; when he comes in as drunk as a lord he drops pricked cards on the stairs, on which he has noted the turns of red and black. Old Desroches is doing all he can to get Philippe reinstated in the army; but, for my part, I believe he would be in despair at having to serve again. Could you have believed that a boy with such beautiful clear blue eyes, and a look like the Chevalier Bayard, would ever have turned out such a scoundrel?"

Notwithstanding the caution and coolness with which Philippe staked his money every evening, he was occasionally cleaned out, as players say. Then, prompted by an irresistible craving to have his stake for the evening, ten francs, he helped himself in the house to his brother's money, to any Madame Descoings might leave about, or

to his mother's. Once already the poor widow had seen through her first sleep a terrible vision: Philippe had come into her room and emptied the pocket of her dress of all the money in it. She had pretended to be asleep, but she had spent the rest of that night in tears. She saw the truth. "One fault does not constitute a vice," Madame Descoings had said; but after constant lapses the vice was plainly visible. Agathe could no longer doubt; her best-beloved son had neither feeling nor honor.

The day after this dreadful vision, before Philippe went out after breakfast, she called him into her room and besought him in suppliant tones to ask her for the money he should need. But his demands became so frequent that now, for above a fortnight, Agathe's savings had been exhausted. She had not a farthing; she thought of seeking work. For several evenings she had discussed with Madame Descoings the means of making money by her needle; indeed, the poor mother had already asked at a shop—Le Père de Famille—for fancy-work to fill in, an employment by which she might earn about a franc a day. In spite of her niece's absolute secrecy, the old woman had easily guessed the reasons for this eagerness to make money by such feminine arts. Indeed, the change in Agathe's appearance was sufficiently eloquent; her fresh complexion was faded, the skin was drawn over the temples and cheek-bones, her forehead was seamed, her eyes lost their lustre, some inward fire was evidently consuming her, and she spent the night in tears.

But what most deeply ravaged her was the necessity for silence as to her pain, her anxieties, and her apprehensions. She never went to sleep till Philippe had come in; she listened for him in the street; she had studied the differences in his voice, in his step, in the very tone of his cane rattling on the paving-stones. She knew everything, exactly the degree of intoxication that he had reached, quaking as she heard him stumble on the stairs. One night she had picked up some gold pieces on the spot where he had let himself fall. When

he had drunk and won, his voice was husky and his stick dragged; but when he had lost, there was something short, crisp, and furious in his footstep; he would sing a tune in a clear voice, and carry his cane shouldered like a musket. At breakfast, if he had been winning, his expression was cheerful and almost affectionate; he jested coarsely, still he jested, with Madame Descoings, with Joseph, and his mother; if he had lost, on the contrary, he was morose, his speech was curt and sharp, his gaze hard, and his gloom quite alarming.

This life of debauchery and the habit of drink left their mark day by day on the countenance that had once been so handsome. The veins in his face were purple, his features grew thick, his eyes lost their lashes, and looked dry. And then Philippe, careless of his person, carried with him the miasma of smoke and spirits, and a smell of muddy boots, which to a stranger would have seemed the last stamp of squalor.

"You ought to have a complete new suit of clothes from head to foot," said Madame Descoings to Philippe one day early in December.

"And who is to pay for them?" said he bitterly. "My poor mother has not a sou; I have five hundred francs a year. It would cost a year's pension to buy me an outfit, and I have pledged it for three years to come . . ."

"What for?" said Joseph.

"A debt of honor. Giroudeau borrowed a thousand francs from Florentine to lend to me.—I am not well got up, it must be confessed; but when you remember that Napoleon is at St. Helena, and sells his plate to buy food, the soldiers that remain faithful to him may very well walk in boot-tops," said he, showing his boots without heels, and he walked off.

"He is not a bad fellow," said Agathe; "he has good feelings."

"He may love the Emperor and still keep himself clean," said Joseph. "If he took some care of himself and his clothes, he would look less like a tramp."

"Joseph, you ought to be indulgent to your brother," said Agathe. "You can do just what you like, while he certainly is out of his place."

"And why did he leave it?" asked Joseph. "What does it matter whether the flag shows Louis XVIII.'s bugs or Napoleon's cockyoly bird if the bunting flies for France? France is France! I would paint for the devil. A soldier ought to fight, if he is a soldier, for love of the art. If he had stayed quietly in the army, by this time he would be a general."

"You are unjust," said Agathe. "Your father, who adored the Emperor, would have approved of what he did. However, he agrees to rejoin the army. God alone knows what it costs your brother to commit what he considers an act of treason."

Joseph rose to go up to his studio; but Agathe took his hand, saying:

"Be good to your brother; he is so unfortunate."

When the artist entered his studio, followed by Madame Descoings, who begged him to spare his mother's feelings, remarking how much she was altered, and what acute mental suffering this alteration betrayed, they found Philippe there, to their great surprise.

"Joseph, my boy," said he in an airy way, "I am desperately in want of money. By the piper! I owe thirty francs for cigars at the tobacconist's, and I dare not pass the cursed shop without paying. I have promised to pay at least ten times."

"All right! I like this way best," said Joseph. "Take it out of the death's head."

"Oh, I took all that last night after dinner."

"There were forty-five francs—"

"That is just what I made it," replied Philippe. "I found them there. Was that wrong?" he asked.

"No, my dear fellow, no," said the artist. "If you were rich, I should do as you do; only, before helping myself, I should ask if it were convenient to you."

"It is very humiliating to have to ask," replied Philippe. "I would sooner you should take it as I do, and say nothing. It shows more confidence. In the army, when a comrade dies, if he has a good pair of boots and you have a bad pair, you exchange with him."

"Yes, but you don't take them while he is alive!"

"A mere quibble!" retorted Philippe with a shrug. "So you have no money?"

"No," said Joseph, determined not to show his hoard.

"In a few days we shall all be rich," said the old woman.

"Oh, yes! You really believe that your three numbers will come out on the 25th at the Paris drawing! You must put in a large stake if you mean to make us all rich."

"A natural ternion for two hundred francs will bring out three millions, to say nothing of the doublets and the single drawings."

"At fifteen thousand times the stake—yes, it is exactly two hundred francs!" cried Philippe.

The old woman bit her lip; she had dropped an imprudent hint.

In fact, as he went downstairs, Philippe was asking himself:

"Where has that old witch hidden the money for her lottery tickets? It is sheer waste of money, and I could make such good use of it! On four stakes of fifty francs each I might make two hundred thousand francs. And it is far more certain than the drawing of three numbers in a lottery!"

He wondered where Madame Descoings would be likely to hide her hoard.

On the eve of the great Church Festivals, Agathe always went to church and stayed there a long time, at confession no doubt, and in preparing for Communion. It was now Christmas Eve. Madame Descoings would certainly go out to buy some extra treat for supper, but perhaps she would pay for her ticket at the same time. The lottery was drawn every five days, on the wheels, in turn, of Bordeaux, Lyons,

Lille, Strasburg, and Paris. The Paris drawing took place on the 25th of each month; the lists were closed at midnight on the 24th. The soldier studied the case, and set himself to watch.

At about noon Philippe came in. Madame Descoings was gone out, but she had taken the door-key. This was no difficulty. Philippe, saying that he had forgotten something, begged the woman at the lodge to go to fetch a locksmith, who lived close by in the Rue Guénégaud, and who opened the door. Philippe's first idea was to search the bed; he unmade it, felt the mattresses before examining the frame, and in the bottom mattress he felt the gold pieces wrapped in paper. He had soon unsewn the ticking and picked out twenty napoleons; then, without wasting time in sewing it up again, he remade the bed neatly enough to prevent the old woman's observing anything wrong.

The gambler made off on a light foot, intending to play three times, at intervals of three hours, and for ten minutes only each time. The great gamblers, ever since 1786, when the gambling-houses were first opened, the formidable gamblers who were the terror of the bank, and who fairly ate money at the tables, to use the familiar expression in such places, never played by any other rule. But before achieving this experience they lost fortunes. All the philosophy of those who farmed the concern and all their profit was derived from the rules; from the non-liability of the bank; from ties called draws, of which half the winnings remained in its possession; and from the villanous fraud authorized by the State, which made it optional to take or reject the players' stakes. In a word, the bank, while refusing to play with a rich and cool hand, devoured the whole fortune of any player who was so persistently foolish as to allow himself to be intoxicated by the rapid whirl of its machinery, for the dealers at trente-et-quarante worked almost as fast as the roulette could.

Philippe had at last succeeded in acquiring that presence of mind which enables a commander-in-chief to keep a keen

eye and a calm brain in the midst of the whirligig of things. He had achieved those high politics of gambling which, it may be said incidentally, enabled a thousand men in Paris to look night after night into a gulf without turning giddy.

With these four hundred francs Philippe was determined to make his fortune in the course of the day. He hid two hundred francs in his boots, and kept two hundred in his pocket. By three o'clock he was at the gambling-house, where the Palais-Royal theatre now stands, where the bankers commonly held the largest reserve. Half an hour after he came out, having won seven thousand francs. He went to see Florentine, paid her five hundred francs that he owed her, and invited her to supper after the play at the Rocher de Cancale. On his way back, he went through the Rue du Sentier to tell his friend Giroudeau of the projected festivity.

At six o'clock Philippe had won twenty-five thousand francs, and at the end of ten minutes kept his word to himself and went away. In the evening, at ten, he had won seventy-five thousand francs. After the supper, which was splendid, Philippe, drunk and confident, returned to the tables at about midnight. Then, against the rule he had made, he played for an hour and doubled his winnings. The bank, from whom his mode of play had wrung a hundred and fifty thousand francs, watched him with curiosity.

"Will he go away or will he stay?" the men asked each other by a glance. "If he stays, he is done for."

Philippe believed that luck was with him, and stayed. At three in the morning the hundred and fifty thousand francs had returned to the cash-box.

The Colonel, who had drunk a good deal of grog while playing, went out in a state of intoxication, which the nipping cold aggravated to the utmost; but a waiter followed him, picked him up, and carried him to one of the horrible places where, inscribed on a lamp, the notice may be read, "Beds by the night." The waiter paid for the ruined gambler, who was laid on a bed in his clothes, and remained there till Christmas night. The managers of the gambling-

houses treated regular customers and high players with respect.

Philippe did not wake till seven that evening, his mouth furred, his face swelled, and racked with nervous fever. His strong constitution enabled him to get on foot to his mother's home, whither he had unwittingly brought sorrow, despair, ruin, and death.

The day before, when dinner was ready, Madame Descoings and Agathe waited two hours for Philippe. They did not sit down till seven o'clock. Agathe almost always went to her room at ten; but as she wished to attend midnight mass, she went to lie down directly after dinner. The old aunt and Joseph remained together in the little sitting-room which now served all purposes, and she begged him to work out the sum of her much-talked-of stake, her monster stake on the famous ternion. She meant to go for the double numbers and first drawings, so as to combine all the chances. After smacking her lips over the poetry of this master-stroke, and pouring out both cornucopias at the feet of her adopted favorite; after telling him all her dreams, proving that she could not fail to win, wondering only how she should endure such good fortune, or wait for it from midnight till ten next morning, Joseph, who did not see where the four hundred francs were to come from, mentioned the matter. The old woman smiled and led him into the old drawing-room, now her bedroom.

"You will see!" said she.

Madame Descoings hastily stripped her bed, and went for her scissors to unstitch the mattress; she put on her spectacles, looked at the ticking, and found it unsewn. On hearing the old woman heave a sigh that came from the depths of her bosom, and seemed choked by the blood rushing to her heart, Joseph instinctively held out his arms to the poor old lottery-gambler, and laid her senseless on a chair, calling to his mother to come. Agathe sprang up, put on her dressing-gown, and hurried in; by the light of a tallow candle she

applied every common remedy for a fainting fit—eau de Cologne on her aunt's temples, cold water on her forehead, burned feathers under her nose; at last she saw her revive.

"They were there this morning; he has taken them—that wretch!"

"What?" asked Joseph.

"I had twenty louis in my mattress, my savings for two years. Only Philippe can have taken them . . ."

"But when?" cried the mother, quite crushed; "he has not been in since breakfast."

"I should be glad to be mistaken," said the old woman. "But this morning, in Joseph's studio, when I spoke of my stake in the lottery I had a warning I was wrong not to go down and take out my little lucky-penny and put it into the lottery at once. I meant to do it, and I forget what hindered me.—Good God! And I went to buy cigars for him!"

"But," said Joseph, "our front door was locked. Besides, it is so vile that I will not believe it. Philippe watched you out, unsewed your mattress, premeditated—! No."

"I felt them there this morning when I made my bed after breakfast," said Madame Descoings.

Agathe, quite horror-stricken, went downstairs to ask whether her son had come in during the day, and the door-keeper told her Philippe's fable. The mother, struck to the heart, came up again completely altered. As white as her cotton shift, she walked as we fancy ghosts may walk, noiselessly, slowly, as if by the impulse of a superhuman power, and yet almost mechanically. She held a candle in her hand, which lighted up her face and her eyes fixed in despair. Without knowing it, she had pushed her hair over her brow with her hands, and this detail made her so beautiful in her horror that Joseph stood riveted by this image of anguish, this vision of a statue of terror and dejection.

"Aunt," said she, "take my spoons and forks; I have six sets, that will make up the sum, for it was I who took it for Philippe; I thought I could replace it before you should find it out. Oh! I have suffered—!"

She sat down. Her dry fixed gaze wavered a little then.

"It is he who has done the trick," said Madame Descoings in an undertone to Joseph.

"No, no," repeated Agathe. "Take the silver, sell it; it is of no use to me; we can use yours."

She went into her room, took up the plate-box, found it very light, opened it, and saw a pawn-ticket. The poor mother gave a dreadful cry. Joseph and Madame Descoings hastened in, glanced at the box, and the mother's heroic falsehood was in vain. They all three stood silent, avoiding even a glance. At that moment, with a gesture almost of madness, Agathe laid her finger on her lips to seal the secret which no one would divulge. Then all three went back to the sitting-room fire.

"I tell you, my children, I am heart-broken," said Madame Descoings. "My numbers will be drawn, I am quite positive! I am not thinking of myself, but of you two!—Philippe is a monster," she went on, turning to her niece. "He does not love you, in spite of all you have done for him. If you do not find some means to protect yourself, the wretch will turn you into the street. Promise me to sell your stock, realize the capital, and sink it in an annuity. By taking that step you will never be a burden on Joseph. Monsieur Desroches wants to set up his son in an office, and the boy" (he was now six-and-twenty) "has found one. He will take your twelve thousand francs and pay you an annuity."

Joseph seized his mother's candlestick and hurried up to the studio; he came down with three hundred francs.

"Here Maman Descoings," said he, offering her his little hoard, "it is no business of ours to inquire what you do with your money; we owe you what is missing, and here it is—almost all of it."

"I!—take your little treasure, the result of your privations, which distress me so much! Are you mad, Joseph?" cried the old woman, evidently torn by her stupid belief in the luck of her numbers in the State lottery, and what seemed to her the sacrilege of such a proceeding.

"Oh! do what you will with it," said Agathe, moved to tears by this action of her true son's.

Madame Descoings took Joseph's head in her hands and kissed his forehead.

"My child, do not tempt me," she said; "I should only lose it. The lottery is a fool's game!"

Never was anything so heroical said in any of the obscure dramas of private life. Was it not, in fact, the triumph of affection over an inveterate vice?

At this minute the bells began to toll for midnight mass.

"Besides, it is too late," added the old woman.

"Oh!" cried Joseph; "here are your cabalistic calculations."

The magnanimous artist seized the tickets, flew downstairs, and away to pay the stake. When he was gone, Agathe and Madame Descoings melted into tears.

"He is gone!" exclaimed the old gambler. "But it will all be his, for it is his money."

Joseph, unluckily, did not in the least know where to find the lottery-ticket offices, which those who frequented them knew as well in Paris as, in these days, smokers know the tobacco shops. The painter rushed wildly on, looking at the lamp signs. When he asked some one he met to tell him where there was a lottery-office, he was told that they were closed, but that one by the steps of the Palais Royal sometimes remained open a little later. The artist flew to the Palais Royal; the office was shut.

"Two minutes sooner and you could have paid in your stake," said one of the ticket-criers who stood at the bottom of the steps, shouting these strange words, "Twelve hundred francs for forty sous!" and selling ready numbered tickets.

By the glimmer of a street lamp and the lights in the Café de la Rotonde, Joseph examined these tickets to see whether by chance either of them bore Madame Descoings' pet numbers; but he could not find one, and returned home in grief at having done in vain all that lay in his power to please the old woman, to whom he related his disappointments.

Agathe and her aunt went off to mass at Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Joseph went to bed. No one kept Christmas Eve. Madame Descoings had lost her head; Agathe's heart was forever broken.

The two women rose late. Ten o'clock was striking when Madame Descoings bestirred herself to get breakfast, which was not ready till half-past eleven. By that time the long frames hanging outside the lottery-ticket offices showed an array of figures. If Madame Descoings had had her ticket, she would have gone by half-past nine o'clock to the Rue neuve des Petits Champs to learn her fate, which was decided in a house next door to the offices of the Minister of Finance, on a spot now occupied by the Square and the Ventadour theatre.

Every time the lottery was drawn, the curious could see at the door of this building a *posse* of old women, cooks, and old men, who at that time constituted as strange a spectacle as that of the stockholders forming a queue on the day when dividends are paid at the Treasury.

"Well, so you are rolling in riches!" exclaimed old Desroches, coming in just as Madame Descoings was swallowing her last mouthful of coffee.

"How?" cried poor Agathe.

"Her three numbers have come out," said he, holding out a list of numbers written on a scrap of paper, such as office clerks kept by the hundred in the paper-tray on their desks.

Joseph read the list. Agathe read the list. Madame Descoings read nothing. She fell back as if stricken by lightning; seeing her face change and hearing her cry, old Desroches and Joseph carried her to her bed. Agathe went for a doctor. The poor woman had fallen in a fit of apoplexy, and she did not recover consciousness till about four in the afternoon. Old Doctor Haudry, her physician, pronounced that, notwithstanding this amelioration, she would do well to settle her affairs and think of her religious duties. She had uttered but two words, "Three millions!"

Old Desroches, to whom Joseph explained the circumstances with the necessary reservations, spoke of numbers of lottery-gamblers who had in the same way missed a fortune on the day when by some fatality they had failed to pay up their stakes; still, he understood how mortal a blow this must be after twenty years of perseverance.

At five o'clock, when perfect silence reigned in the little dwelling, and when the dying woman, watched by Joseph at the foot of her bed, and Agathe at her pillow, was expecting her grandson, whom Desroches had gone to seek, the sound of Philippe's step and walking-stick echoed on the stairs.

"There he is, there he is!" cried Madame Descoings, sitting up in bed, and suddenly recovering the use of her paralyzed tongue.

Agathe and Joseph were impressed by the impulse of horror which so vehemently roused the sick woman. Their miserable expectations were wholly justified by Philippe's appearance: by his purple, vacant face, his uncertain gait, and the horrible look of his eyes with deep red rims, glazed and yet wild-looking; he was shivering violently with fever, and his teeth chattered.

"What the devil!" he exclaimed. "Neither bit nor sup, and my throat is on fire. Well, what's up now? The foul fiend puts his hoof in all that concerns us. My old Descoings in bed, and making eyes at me as big as saucers—"

"Be silent, sir," said Agathe, rising. "At least you may respect the misery you have caused."

"Hallo! *Sir?*" said he, looking at his mother. "My dear little mother, that is not kind; do you no longer love your boy?"

"Are you worthy to be loved? Have you forgotten what you did yesterday? You may look out for a lodging for yourself; you shall no longer live with me. From to-morrow," she added, "for in such a state as you are in it would be difficult—"

"To turn me out?—So you are going to play the melo-

drama of the Banished Son?" he went on. "Dear, dear! Is that how you take it? Well, you are all a pretty pack of owls! What harm have I done? Cleaned out the old woman's mattress for her. We don't keep money in wool, deuce take it.—And where is the crime? Did not she take twenty thousand francs, I should like to know? Are not we her creditors? .I have taken so much on account; that's all."

"Oh, God! oh, God!" cried the dying woman, clasping her hands in prayer.

"Hold your tongue!" said Joseph, rushing at his brother and clapping his hand over his mouth.

"Right about face, half turn to the left, you dirty little painter!" replied Philippe, laying his heavy hand on Joseph's shoulder, turning him round, and landing him in an arm-chair. "That is not the way to meddle with the mustache of a Major of Dragoons of the Imperial Guard."

"She has repaid me all she owed me," cried Agathe, rising and turning an angry face to her son. "Besides, that is nobody's business but mine. You are killing her. Go," she added with a gesture that exhausted all her force, "and never let me see you again. You are a villain!"

"I am killing her?"

"Yes; her numbers were drawn in the lottery, and you stole the money she would have staked."

"Oh, if she is dying of a lost chance, then it is not I who am killing her," retorted the drunkard.

"Go, I say," said Agathe; "you fill me with horror. You have every vice! Good God, and is this my son?"

A hollow croak from Madame Descoings' throat had aggravated Agathe's wrath.

"And yet I still love you, mother, though you are the cause of all my misfortunes," said Philippe. "And you can turn me out of doors on a Christmas Day, the birthday of What d'ye call him—Jesus!—What did you do to Grandpapa Rouget, your father, that he turned you out and disinherited you? If you had not offended him in some way, we should have been rich, and I should not have been reduced to the

depths of misery. What did you do to your father, I should like to know, you who are so good? You see, I may be a very good boy, and be turned out of doors nevertheless—I, the glory of the family—"

"Its disgrace!" cried Madame Descoings.

"Leave the room, or kill me!" cried Joseph, rushing on his brother with the fury of a lion.

"Good God! good God!" cried Agathe, trying to separate the brothers.

At this moment Bixiou and Doctor Haudry came in. Joseph had knocked down his brother, and Philippe was lying on the floor.

"He is a perfect wild beast!" he said. "Not a word, or I'll—"

"I will remember this," bellowed Philippe.

"A little family difference?" said Bixiou.

"Pick him up," said the physician; "he is as ill as the old lady; undress him, put him to bed, and pull his boots off."

"That is easily said," observed Bixiou. "But they must be cut off: his legs are swelled—"

Agathe brought a pair of scissors. When she had slit the boots, which at that time were worn outside tight-fitting trousers, ten gold pieces rolled out on to the floor.

"There—there is her money," muttered Philippe. "Blasted idiot that I am, I forgot the reserve fund! So I too missed fire!"

The delirium of high fever now came upon Philippe, who began to talk wildly. Joseph, with the help of the elder Desroches, who came in presently, and of Bixiou, got the wretched man up to his own room. Doctor Haudry was obliged to write a line begging the loan of a strait-waistcoat from the hospital, for his mania increased to such a pitch that they feared he might kill himself—he was like a madman.

By nine o'clock peace was restored. The Abbé Loraux and Desroches did what they could to comfort Agathe, who

sat by her aunt's pillow, and never ceased crying; but she only listened and shook her head, preserving obstinate silence; only Joseph and Madame Descoings knew the depth and extent of the inward wound.

"He will do better, mother," said Joseph at last, when Desroches and Bixiou were gone.

"Oh!" cried the poor woman, "but he is right. Philippe is right! My father cursed me; I have no right. . . . Here is the money," she went on to Madame Descoings, adding Joseph's three hundred francs to the two hundred found in Philippe's possession. "Go and see if your brother wants something to drink," she said to Joseph.

"Will you keep a promise made to a dying woman?" asked the old woman, feeling that her mind was going.

"Yes, aunt."

"Then swear to me to hand over your money to that young Desroches for an annuity. You will miss my little income, and from all I hear you say I know you will let that wretch squeeze you to the last sou—"

"Aunt, I swear it."

The old woman died on the 31st December, five days after the fatal blow so innocently dealt her by the elder Desroches. The five hundred francs, all the money there was in the house, barely sufficed to pay the expenses of her funeral. She left a very little plate and furniture, of which Madame Bridau paid the value to her grandson.

Reduced now to eight hundred francs a year, the annuity paid her by the younger Desroches—who concluded the purchase of a business, at present without clients, and took her twelve thousand francs as capital—Agathe gave up her rooms on the third floor and sold all but the most necessary furniture. When, at the end of a month, Philippe was convalescent, his mother coldly explained to him that the expenses of his illness had absorbed all her ready money; henceforth she must work for her living, and she entreated him in the most affectionate manner to rejoin the army and provide for himself.

"You might have saved yourself your sermon," said Philippe, looking at his mother with eyes cold from utter indifference. "I have very clearly seen that neither you nor my brother love me in the least. I am alone in the world now! Well, I prefer it so."

"Prove yourself worthy to be loved," replied the poor mother, wounded to the quick, "and we shall love you again."

"Fiddlesticks!" said he, interrupting her.

He took his old hat, all worn at the edges, and his stick, stuck the hat over his ear, and went downstairs whistling.

"Philippe! where are you off to without any money?" cried his mother, who could not restrain her tears. "Here—"

She held out a hundred francs done up in paper. Philippe came up the steps he had gone down and took the money.

"And you do not kiss me?" said she, melting into tears.

He clasped her to his breast, without any of the effusive feeling which alone gives value to a kiss.

"And where are you going?" said Agathe.

"To Florentine, Giroudeau's mistress. They really are friends!" he replied coarsely.

He went. Agathe returned to her room, her knees quaking, her eyes dim, her heart in a vise. She fell on her knees, besought God to protect her unnatural son, and abdicated the burden of motherhood.

In February, 1822, Madame Bridau had established herself in the bedroom formerly occupied by Philippe, over the kitchen of her third-floor rooms. The painter's bedroom and studio were on the opposite side of the landing. Seeing his mother reduced so low, Joseph was determined that she should be as comfortable as possible. After his brother had left he took the arrangement of the attic in hand, and gave it an artistic stamp. He put in a carpet; the bed, very simply arranged, but with exquisite taste, had a character

of monastic simplicity. The walls, hung with cheap chintz, judiciously chosen of a color to harmonize with the furniture, which was cleaned to look like new, made the little room look neat and elegant. He had a door made to shut in the landing, and hung it with a curtain. The window was screened by a blind that subdued the light. Thus, though the poor mother's life was restricted to the simplest expression which a woman's life in Paris can be reduced to, Agathe was at any rate better off than anybody in a similar position, thanks to her son.

To spare his mother the worst fatigues of housekeeping, Joseph took her to dine every day at a *table d'hôte* in the Rue de Beaune frequented by ladies of respectability, deputies, and men of title, where the charge for each person was ninety francs a month. Agathe, having only the breakfast to provide, fell into the same habits for her son as she had kept up for his father. In spite of Joseph's pious fibs, she somehow found out that her dinner cost about a hundred francs a month. Horrified by this enormous expenditure, and never supposing that her son could earn much by "painting naked women," by the influence of her director, the Abbé Loraux, she obtained the promise of a place with seven hundred francs a year, in a lottery-ticket office granted by Government to the Comtesse de Bauvan, the widow of a Chouan leader.

These lottery-offices, bestowed on widows who had friends at Court, not infrequently were the whole support of a family who managed the business of it. But, under the Restoration, the difficulty of finding rewards in the gift of a constitutional Government for all the services that had been done, led to the practice of giving to impoverished ladies of rank not one, but two, such lottery-ticket offices, of which the emoluments might be from six to ten thousand francs. In such cases the widow of a general or a nobleman did not keep the ticket-office herself; she had managers with a sort of partnership. When these managers were unmarried men they could not help having a clerk under them, for the office

always had to be kept open till midnight, and the accounts required by the Minister of Finance were very elaborate.

The Comtesse de Bauvan, to whom the Abbé Loraux explained Madame Bridau's position, promised that if her present manager should leave, Agathe should have the reversion; meanwhile she bargained for a salary of six hundred francs for the widow. Compelled to be at her work by ten in the morning, poor Agathe had scarcely time to dine; she returned to her office at seven in the evening, and never stirred out again before midnight. Never once for two years did Joseph fail to call for his mother and take her home, and he often fetched her to dinner. His friends would see him leave the Opera, the Italiens, or the most splendid drawing-rooms, to be in the Rue Vivienne before midnight.

Agathe soon fell into the monotonously regular way of life, which often is a comfort and support to sorrow-stricken souls. In the morning, after tidying her room, where there were now no cats or little birds, she cooked the breakfast at a corner of her fireplace, and laid it in the studio, where she ate it with her son. She then arranged Joseph's bedroom, took off her fire, and brought her sewing into the studio, sitting by the little stove, and leaving the room if he had a visitor or a model. Though she knew nothing of art or its processes, she liked the stillness of the place. In this matter she made no advance; she affected nothing; she was always greatly astonished at the importance attached to color, composition, and drawing. When one of the members of Joseph's little club, or one of his artist friends, was discussing such matters—Schinner, Pierre Grassou, or Léon de Lora, a very young student then known by the name of Mistigris—she would come and look on attentively, and never discover what could give occasion to such big words and hot arguments.

She made her son's linen, mended his stockings and socks; she even went so far as to clean his palette, collect his painting-rags, and keep the studio in order. And see-

ing his mother so intelligently careful of these little details, Joseph loaded her with kindness. If the mother and son did not meet half-way on questions of art, they were closely united by affection.

The mother had a scheme. One morning when she had made much of Joseph while he was sketching an enormous picture—which he subsequently painted, but which fell flat—she ventured to say aloud—

"Oh, dear! I wonder what he is doing?"

"Who?"

"Philippe."

"By Jove! the fellow is having a hard time. It will do him good."

"But he has had hard times before, and perhaps that was what spoiled him for us. If he were happy, he would be good."

"My dear mother, you fancy that he was in distress while he was away, but you are mistaken; he lived at his ease in New York, as he still does here—"

"But if he were in want, near us, that would be dreadful—"

"Yes," said Joseph; "and for my part, I am willing to give him money, but I will not see him. He killed poor Aunt Descoings."

"Then you would not paint his portrait?"

"For you, mother, I would suffer martyrdom. I would remember only the one fact that he is my brother."

"His portrait as a Captain of Dragoons, on horseback?"

"Well, I have a fine horse there, copied from Gros, and I do not know what to do with it."

"Then go to his friend and find out what is become of him."

"I will."

Agathe rose; her scissors, everything fell on the floor; she came to kiss Joseph on his forehead and shed two tears on his hair.

"That boy is your passion," said he. "We all have our ill-starred passion!"

That evening Joseph went to the Rue du Sentier at about four o'clock, and there he found his brother, filling Giroudeau's place. The elder captain of Dragoons had been transferred as cashier to a weekly paper managed by his nephew. Though Finot was still proprietor of the little daily paper for which he had issued shares, though the shares were all in his own hands, the ostensible owner and editor was a friend of his named Lousteau, the son, as it happened, of the sub-delegate from Issoudun on whom Bridau's grandfather (Doctor Rouget) had wanted to be revenged, and consequently Madame Hochon's nephew.

To oblige his uncle, Finot had given him Philippe as deputy, paying him, however, only half the salary. Every day at five o'clock Giroudeau checked the balance and carried off the money taken during the day. Coloquinte, the old soldier who served as messenger, and who ran the errands, also kept an eye on Major Philippe. Philippe, however, was behaving himself. A salary of six hundred francs and a pension of five hundred were enough for him to live on, all the more because a fire was provided for him during the day, and in the evenings he could go to the play on the free list, so he had nothing to pay for but food and lodging. Coloquinte was going out, loaded with stamped papers, and Philippe was brushing his green linen office cuffs, when Joseph walked in.

"Lord! Here is the brat," said Philippe. "Well, we will dine together; you shall come to the Opera, Florine and Florentine have a box. I am going with Giroudeau; you will be of the party, and I will introduce you to Nathan."

He took up his loaded cane, and wetted the end of a cigar.

"I cannot avail myself of your invitation; I must look after my mother. We dine at a *table d'hôte*."

"Well, and how is she, poor dear thing?"

"She is pretty well," said the painter. "I have made a new portrait of my father and one of Aunt Descoings. I

have finished one of myself, and I should like to give my mother one of you in the uniform of the Imperial Dragoon Guards."

"All right."

"But you must come and sit—"

"I am obliged to be here, in this hen-coop, every day from nine till five."

"Two Sundays will be enough."

"All right, young 'un," replied Napoleon's erstwhile staff-officer, as he lighted his cigar at the porter's lamp.

When Joseph described Philippe's position to his mother, as they went together to their dinner in the Rue de Beaune, he felt her hand tremble on his arm; joy lighted up the faded face; the poor woman drew breath as though she had been relieved of some enormous burden. Next day she was full of little attentions for Joseph, prompted by her happiness and gratitude; she dressed his studio with flowers, and bought two vases.

The first Sunday when Philippe was to sit, Agathe took care to provide an excellent breakfast. She placed everything on the table, not forgetting a flask of brandy, not more than half full. She then hid herself behind a screen, in which she made a small hole. The ex-dragoon had sent his uniform the day before, and she could not refrain from hugging it. When Philippe mounted, in full dress, on one of the stuffed horses kept by saddlers, which Joseph had hired, Agathe, not to betray herself, was obliged to hide the slight noise of her weeping under the voices of the two brothers as they talked.

Philippe sat for two hours before and two hours after breakfast. At three in the afternoon he put on his ordinary dress, and, while smoking a cigar, again invited his brother to dine with him at the Palais Royal. He jingled the gold in his pockets.

"No," said Joseph. "You frighten me when I see you with gold about you."

"By Heaven! Then you still have a bad opinion of me

here?" roared the Lieutenant-Colonel in a voice of thunder. "Do you think a man can never save?"

"No, no," said Agathe, coming out of her hiding-place, and kissing her son. "We will go and dine with him, Joseph."

Joseph dared not scold his mother; he dressed, and Philippe took them to the Rue Montorgueuil, where, at the Rocher de Cancale, he gave them a splendid dinner, for which the bill ran up to a hundred francs.

"The Devil!" said Joseph uneasily. "With a salary of eleven hundred francs a year you manage, like Ponchard in the 'Dame Blanche,' to save enough to purchase an estate!"

"Pooh, I am in luck," said the dragoon, who had drunk an enormous quantity of wine.

On hearing this speech, made on the doorstep just as they were getting into a hackney coach to go to the play—for Philippe had proposed to take his mother to the Circus; the only entertainment of the kind allowed her by her director—Joseph tightened his hand on his mother's arm. Agathe at once said she felt unwell, and declined to go to the theatre, so Philippe took her and his brother to the Rue Mazarine. When she found herself alone with Joseph in their attic, she sat long lost in thought.

On the next Sunday Philippe came again to sit. This time his mother sat in the room with the brothers. She brought in the breakfast, and could ask the trooper various questions. She then learned that the nephew of her mother's old friend, Madame Hochon, figured in a small way in literature. Philippe and his ally Giroudeau lived in the society of journalists, actresses, and publishers, and, as cashiers, met with some respect. Philippe, who always took drams of kirsch while sitting after breakfast, talked freely. He boasted of becoming a person of importance again ere long. But at a question from Joseph as to his pecuniary means he kept silence.

As it happened, the next day was a great holiday, and the paper was not to come out, so Philippe, to get the thing

done with, proposed to come and sit again on the morrow. Joseph explained to him that the Salon would open before long, that he had not money enough to buy frames for his pictures, and could only earn it by finishing a copy of a Rubens required by a picture-dealer named Magus. The original belonged to a rich Swiss banker, who had loaned it only for ten days. Next day would be the last; it was therefore absolutely necessary to put off the sitting till the following Sunday.

"And that is it?" said Philippe, looking at a painting by Rubens that stood on an easel.

"Yes," said Joseph. "That is worth twenty thousand francs. That is what genius can do. There are such squares of canvas that are worth a hundred thousand francs."

"Well, I like your copy best," said the dragoon.

"It is fresher," said Joseph, laughing; "but my copy is only worth one thousand francs. I must have to-morrow to give the old tone and look of the original, that they may be indistinguishable."

"Good-by, mother," said Philippe, embracing Agathe, "till next Sunday."

On the following day Elie Magus was to come for his copy. A friend of Joseph's, Pierre Grassou, who often worked for the dealer, wished to see the copy finished. To play him a trick, Joseph put his copy, glazed with a particular varnish, in the place of the original, which he set up on his easel. Pierre Grassou de Fougères was completely taken in, and amazed at this extraordinary imitation.

"Will you take in old Magus?" said Pierre Grassou.

"That remains to be seen," said Joseph.

But the dealer did not come, and it was late. Agathe was to dine with Madame Desroches, who had just lost her husband; so Joseph proposed to Grassou to come and dine at his *table d'hôte*. On going out he left the key of the studio, as he always did, with the woman who kept the house door.

"I am going to sit to my brother this evening," said Philippe to this woman an hour later. "He will be in presently, and I will wait for him in the studio."

The woman gave him the key. Philippe went up, took the copy, thinking it was the original, came down, gave back the key, explaining that he had forgotten something, and went off with the Rubens to sell it for three thousand francs. He had taken the precaution of telling Elie Magus, from his brother, not to call till the next day. At night, when Joseph came in after fetching his mother from Madame Desroches', the porter told him of Philippe's vagaries, coming away almost as soon as he had gone in.

"If he has not had the good taste to take the copy, I am a ruined man!" exclaimed the painter, at once guessing the theft. He flew up the three flights of stairs and into the studio, and exclaimed, "Thank God! He has been what he will be to the end—a fool and a knave."

Agathe, who had followed Joseph, did not understand this exclamation; but when her son explained it, she simply stood still, dry-eyed.

"I have but one son!" she said in a weak voice.

"We have always avoided disgracing him before strangers," replied Joseph. "But we must now tell the porter he is never to be admitted. Henceforth we must carry our keys.—I will finish the portrait from memory, there is little to be done to it."

"Leave it as it is; it would make me too unhappy," replied his mother, stricken to the heart, and appalled by such meanness.

Philippe knew what the price of this copy was needed for, knew the gulf of difficulty into which he was flinging his brother, and nothing had deterred him. After this last crime, Agathe would never mention Philippe; her face assumed a look of bitter, deep, and concentrated despair. One thought was killing her.

"Some day," she said to herself, "we shall see the name of Bridau in the criminal courts."

Two months after this, just before Agathe entered on her duties at the lottery office, a soldier called one morning to see Madame Bridau, who was at breakfast with Joseph, announcing himself as a friend of Philippe's on urgent business.

When Giroudeau mentioned his name the mother and son quailed, all the more because the ex-dragoon had a rough, weather-beaten sailor's countenance that was anything rather than reassuring. His ashy gray eyes, his piebald mustache, the remaining tufts of hair brushed up round his butter-colored bald head, had an indescribably unwholesome and licentious look. He wore an old iron-gray overcoat, with the rosette of an officer of the Legion of Honor; it was buttoned with difficulty over a stomach like a cook's, quite in keeping with a mouth that opened from ear to ear, and broad shoulders. This frame was carried on a pair of thin legs. His complexion, with the high color on the cheek-bones, betrayed a jovial life. The lower part of his cheeks was deeply wrinkled, and overlapped his worn black velvet collar. Among other decorative touches, the ex-dragoon had in his ears an enormous pair of gold earrings.

"What a sot!" said Joseph to himself.

"Madame," said Finot's uncle and cashier, "your son is in such an unfortunate predicament that his friends cannot help applying to you to beg you to share the very considerable expenses he involves them in. He can no longer do his work for the paper; and Mademoiselle Florentine of the Porte Saint-Martin has given him a room in a miserable attic in the Rue Vendôme, where she lives. Philippe is dying; if you and his brother cannot pay for the doctor and the medicine, we shall be obliged, for his own sake and cure, to have him taken to the Capucins. But we will keep him ourselves for three hundred francs; he must positively have a nurse; he goes out in the evening while Mademoiselle Florentine is at the theatre, and he takes irritant drinks, bad for his malady, and contrary to rule. And we are attached to him; it really makes us unhappy. The poor fellow has pledged his pension for three years; a substitute has been found for the

moment to fill his place, and he gets no pay. But he will kill himself, Madame, if we cannot put him in the asylum kept by Doctor Dubois. It is a decent place, and the charge is ten francs a day. Florentine and I will pay for half a month's treatment there, do you pay the rest. . . . Come, it will not be for more than two months."

"Indeed, Monsieur, as a mother I cannot but be eternally grateful for all you are doing for my son," replied Agathe. "But that son has cut himself off from my affection; and as for money—I have none. To avoid being a burden on this son, who works night and day, and is killing himself, who deserves all his mother's love, I am going, the day after to-morrow, into a lottery-ticket office as assistant clerk.—At my age!"

"And you, young man?" said the trooper to Joseph. "Come, will not you do as much for your brother as a dancer at the Porte Saint-Martin and an old soldier—?"

"Look here!" said Joseph, out of patience. "Would you like me to tell you in the plainest language what was the purpose of your visit? You came to try to fleece us."

"Well, then, to-morrow your brother will go to the hospital."

"He will be very well looked after," said Joseph. "If ever I should be in the same plight, I should go there myself!"

Giroudeau went away, much disappointed, but also very seriously grieved at having to send a man who had been on Napoleon's staff at the battle of Montereau to the hospital of the Capucins.

Three months after this, one morning toward the end of July, Agathe, on her way to her office, crossing the Pont Neuf to save the toll of a sou on the Pont des Arts, saw a man lounging by the shops of the Quai de l'Ecole as she walked along by the river parapet. He wore the livery of the second degree of poverty, and she was startled, for she thought he resembled Philippe.

There are, in fact, three degrees of poverty in Paris.

First, that of the men who keep up appearances, and who have the future before them; the poverty of young men, artists, men of the world who are down on their luck. The symptoms of this kind of want are visible only to the microscope of the most practiced observer. These people constitute the knighthood of poverty; they still ride in a cab. In the second rank are old men, to whom everything is a matter of indifference, who, in the month of June, display the Cross of the Legion of Honor on an alpaca coat. This is the poverty of old annuitants, old clerks living at Sainte-Périne, careless now about their appearance. Last comes poverty in rags, the poverty of the common people, and the most poetical of all; studied by Callot and Hogarth, by Murillo, Charlet, Raffet, Gavarni, Meissonier; adored and cultivated by Art, especially at the Carnival!

The man in whom the unhappy Agathe fancied she recognized her son had, as it were, one foot on each of these two lowest steps. She saw a horribly starchless collar, a mangy hat, broken and patched boots, a threadbare overcoat with buttons that had lost their mold, while their empty gaping or twisted skins matched the torn pockets and greasy collar. Traces of flue on the cloth plainly revealed that if there were anything in those pockets, it could only be dust. Out of a pair of ripped iron-gray trousers the man drew hands as dirty as a workman's. Over his breast a knitted woollen undervest, tawny with long wear, of which the sleeves came below those of the coat, and the edge was pulled outside the trousers, served visibly and undoubtedly as a substitute for linen. Philippe wore a shade over his eyes of green silk stretched on wire. His head, almost bald, his color, and hollow cheeks showed that he had just come out of that dreadful hospital.

His blue military coat, though white at the seams, still displayed his Rosette. Thus every passer-by looked at this veteran, a victim of the Government no doubt, with curiosity, mingled with pity; for the Rosette attracted the eye, and suggested honorable fears for the Legion of Honor, even in the most rabid *ultras*. At that time, though an attempt had

been made to cast a slur on the Order by reckless promotions, not more than fifty-three thousand persons in France had the right to display it.

Agathe was thrilled to the marrow. Though she could not possibly love this son of hers, she still could suffer acutely through him. Touched by a last gleam of motherly feeling, she shed tears as she saw the dashing staff-officer make as though he would go into a tobacconist's to buy a cigar, and stop on the threshold; he had felt in his pockets and found nothing. Agathe hastily crossed the road, drew out her purse, pushed it into Philippe's hand, and fled as if she had committed a crime.

For two days after she could eat nothing; she constantly saw before her the horrible vision of her son dying of hunger in Paris.

"When he has spent the money in my purse, who will give him any?" thought she. "Giroudeau was not deceiving us; Philippe has just come out of the hospital."

She no longer saw her poor aunt's murderer, the scourge of the family, the domestic thief, the gambler, drunkard, low debauchee; what she saw was a discharged patient dying of hunger, a smoker bereft of tobacco. At seven-and-forty she looked like a woman of seventy. Her eyes grew dim in tears and prayer.

But this was not the last blow to be dealt her by this dreadful son; her worst anticipations were to be realized. A conspiracy was discovered of officers on service, and the paragraphs of the "Moniteur" containing the details of the arrests were shouted in the streets. In the recesses of her little coop, in the lottery office in the Rue Vivienne, Agathe heard the name of Philippe Bridau. She fainted away; and the head-clerk, understanding her grief and the necessity for her taking some action, gave her a fortnight's leave of absence.

"Ah, my dear! We, with our austerity, have driven him to this," she said to Joseph, as she went to lie down.

"I will go to see Desroches," said Joseph.

The artist went off to place his brother's case in the hands

of Desroches, who was regarded as the craftiest and astutest attorney in Paris, and who had rendered good service to various persons of importance, among others to des Lupeaulx, at that time Chief Secretary in a Minister's office. Meanwhile Giroudeau came to call on the widow, who trusted him this time.

"Madame," said he, "find twelve thousand francs, and your son will be released for want of evidence. We have only to purchase the silence of two witnesses."

"I will get them," said the poor mother, not knowing how or whence.

Inspired by the danger, she wrote to her godmother Madame Hochon to beg them of Jean-Jacques Rouget, to save Philippe. If Rouget should refuse, she entreated Madame Hochon to lend her the money, promising to repay it in two years. By return of post she received the following letter:

"MY DEAR CHILD—Though your brother has, first and last, forty thousand francs a year, to say nothing of the money he has saved in the last seventeen years, which Monsieur Hochon estimates at more than six hundred thousand francs, he will not spend two farthings on the nephews he has never seen. As for me—you cannot know that so long as my husband lives I shall never have six francs to call my own. Hochon is the greatest miser in Issoudun; I do not know what he does with his money; he does not give his grandchildren twenty francs in a year. To borrow it I should have to ask his leave, and he would not give it. I have not even attempted to speak with your brother, who keeps a woman, whose very humble servant he is. It is pitiable to see how the poor man is treated in his own house when he has a sister and nephews.

"I have hinted to you several times that your presence at Issoudun might save your brother, and rescue from the clutches of that hussy a fortune of forty or even sixty thousand francs a year; but you do not answer me, or seem not to have understood me. So I write to you to-day without

any circumlocution. I sympathize deeply with the misfortune that has come upon you, but I can give you nothing but pity, my dearest child.

"This is why I can do nothing to help you: Hochon, at the age of eighty-five, eats his four meals a day, sups off hard-boiled eggs and salad, and is as brisk as a rabbit. I shall have lived all my days—for he will write my epitaph—without ever having had twenty francs in my purse. If you like to come to Issoudun to combat the influence of your brother's concubine, though there are good reasons why Rouget should not receive you into his house, I shall find it difficult to obtain my husband's permission to invite you to mine. Still, you can come; he will give way on that point. I know a way of getting what I want in some things, and that is by talking of my will. This seems to me so atrocious that I have never yet had recourse to it; but for you I would do the impossible. I hope your Philippe will get out of the scrape, especially if you have a good advocate; but come to Issoudun as soon as you can. Remember that your brother, at fifty-seven, is older and more frail than Monsieur Hochon. So the case is urgent.

"Already there are rumors of a will depriving you of your inheritance; but by Monsieur Hochon's account there is yet time to procure its revocation.

"Farewell, my little Agathe. God be with you. And rely on your godmother, too, for she loves you.

"MAXIMILIENNE HOCHON, née LOUSTEAU.

"P.S.—Has my nephew Étienne, who writes for the papers, and is intimate, I am told, with your son Philippe, ever been to pay his respects to you?—But only come, and we will talk about him."

This letter gave Agathe much to think about; of course she showed it to Joseph, to whom she was obliged to confide Giroudeau's suggestion. The artist, who was cautious when his brother was concerned, pointed out to his mother that she

ought to lay it all before Desroches. Struck by the truth of this remark, she and her son went next day, at six in the morning, to call on Desroches in the Rue de Bussy.

The lawyer, as lean as his father before him, with a harsh voice, a coarse skin, pitiless eyes, and a face like a ferret's licking the blood of murdered chickens off its lips, sprang like a tiger when he heard of Giroudeau's call.

"Bless me, mother Bridau," he cried in his shrill, hard voice, "how long will you continue to be the dupe of your cursed scoundrel of a son? Do not give him a farthing. I will be responsible for Philippe; it is to save him in the future that I shall leave him to the sentence of the superior Court. You quail at the idea of his being found guilty, but God grant that his counsel may fail to get him off. You, go to Issoudun; save your fortune and that of your children. If you do not succeed, if your brother has made his will in that woman's favor, and you cannot get him to revoke it—well, at any rate, collect the materials for proving undue influence, and I will conduct the case. But there! You are too good a woman to know how to find out the grounds for such an action. In the holidays I will go myself to Issoudun—if I possibly can."

And this "I will go myself" made the artist shiver in his skin.

Desroches winked at Joseph as a sign that he should let his mother go downstairs first, and detained him for an instant.

"Your brother is a base wretch; he, voluntarily or involuntarily, is the cause of the discovery of the conspiracy; for the rascal is so cunning that it is impossible to find out the truth about it. Fool or traitor—I leave you to choose between them. He will no doubt be placed under the eye of the detective police; but that is all. Be quite easy; I alone know even this much. Hurry off to Issoudun with your mother. You have all your wits; try to save the inheritance."

"Come, poor mother, Desroches is right," said Joseph,

rejoining Agathe on the stairs. "I have sold my pictures; let us set out for le Berry, as you have a fortnight's leave."

Having written to her godmother to announce their arrival, Agathe and Joseph started next day for Issoudun, leaving Philippe to his fate. The diligence went down the Rue de l'Enfer to take the Orleans road. When Agathe saw the Luxembourg, whither Philippe had been transferred, she could not help saying:

"After all, but for the Allies he would not be there now!"

Many sons would have given an impatient shrug or smiled in pity; but Joseph, who was alone with her in the coupé of the diligence, threw his arm round her, and pressed her to his heart, saying, "Oh, mother! you are a mother as Raphael was a painter! And you always will be a dear goose of a mother!"

Aroused from her troubles by the amusement of the journey, Madame Bridau was presently obliged to think of the purpose of her visit. Of course, she re-read Madame Hochon's letter, which had so strongly excited Desroches. Struck by such words as "concubine" and "hussy," traced by the pen of an old woman of seventy, as pious as she was respectable, to designate the woman who was absorbing Jean-Jacques Rouget's fortune, while he himself was spoken of as a poor creature, she began to wonder how her presence at Issoudun could avail to save her inheritance. Joseph, an artist, poor and disinterested, knew little of the law, and his mother's exclamation puzzled him.

"Before sending us off to protect our inheritance, our friend Desroches would have done well to explain to us how we can be robbed of it," said he.

"So far as my memory serves me—but my head was full of the notion of Philippe in prison, without a pipe even perhaps, and on the eve of standing his trial before the superior court"—said Agathe, "I fancy Desroches said we were to collect materials for an action against undue influence if it should appear that my brother has made his will in favor of this—this—woman."

"A good joke for Desroches!" cried Joseph. "Well, if we can make nothing of it, I will ask him to go himself."

"Do not let us rack our brains for nothing," said Agathe. "When we are there, my godmother will advise us."

This conversation, held at the moment when, after changing coach at Orleans, Madame Bridau and Joseph were entering the district of Sologne, sufficiently betrays the incapacity of both the artist and his mother to play the part the terrible attorney had assigned to them.

But on returning to Issoudun after an absence of thirty years, Agathe found the manners of the place so altered, that a slight sketch of the life of the town is indispensable. Without such a picture, it would be difficult to understand Madame Hochon's real heroism in trying to help her god-daughter, or Jean-Jacques Rouget's extraordinary position.

Though the doctor had made his son regard Agathe as a stranger, still, in a brother, there was something rather extraordinary in living for thirty years without giving his sister any sign of his existence. This silence must evidently have its cause in some unusual circumstances which any relations but Agathe and Joseph would long since have insisted on knowing. And, in fact, there was a certain connection between the state of the town and the Bridaus' concerns, which will come to light in the course of this narrative.

With all due respect to Paris, Issoudun is one of the oldest towns in France. Notwithstanding historical prejudice, which insists on regarding the Emperor Probus as the Noah of Gaul, Cæsar writes of the fine wine of Champ-Fort (de Campo Forti), one of the finest vintages of Issoudun. Rigord mentions the town in terms which allow of no doubt as to its large population and extensive commerce. Still, these two authorities would give Issoudun a moderate antiquity in comparison with its really immense age. Excavations, lately made by a learned archæologist of the town, Monsieur Armand Pérémet, have led to the discovery of a

basilica of the fifth century—probably the only example in France—under the famous tower of Issoudun. This church preserves in the materials of which it is built the record of a previous civilization; for the stones are those of a Roman temple of earlier date. And, indeed, the researches of this antiquary show that Issoudun, like all French towns of which the name, ancient or modern, ends in dun = *dunum*, contains in its name a certificate of native origin. The syllable *dun*, attaching to every hill consecrated to the religion of the Druids, shows it to have been a Celtic military and religious centre. The Romans then may have built at the foot of the Dun of the Gauls a temple to Isis; hence, according to Chaumon, the name of the town, Is-sous-dun (Is[is] under-hill)—Is' being an abbreviated form of Isis.

Richard Cœur de Lion undoubtedly built the famous tower, where he coined money, over a basilica of the fifth century, the third sanctuary of the third religion of this ancient city. He made use of the church as a base which he needed to add to the height of his ramparts, and preserved it by covering it with his feudal fortifications as with a cloak. Issoudun next became the seat of the transient authority of the *Routiers* and *Cottereaux*, bands of brigands with which Henry II. opposed his son Richard when he rebelled as Count of Poitou. The history of Aquitaine, not having been written by the Benedictines, will now probably never be written, as there are no more Benedictines. Hence it is well to throw every possible light on these archæological obscurities whenever an opportunity offers.

There is still further evidence of the ancient importance of Issoudun in the use made of the little Tournemine River, which has been raised for a considerable distance on an aqueduct several yards above the natural level of the Théols, the stream that encircles the town. This work is, beyond question, due to Roman engineers. Finally, the quarter lying to the north of the castle is intersected by a road known for two thousand years as the Rue de Rome; and the inhabitants of the suburb, who are certainly of a

quite distinct type in race, blood, and features, call themselves the direct descendants of the Romans. They are almost all vine-dressers, and singularly stern in their manners, owing, perhaps, to their origin, and perhaps also to their triumph over the Cottereaux and Routiers, whom they exterminated in the twelfth century in the plain of Charost.

After the outbreak in 1830, France was too much agitated to pay any attention to the rebellion among the vine-growers of Issoudun, which was very serious, though the details were never published, and for very good reasons. In the first place, the citizens of Issoudun would not allow any troops to enter the city. They chose to be responsible for it themselves, after the usage and traditions of the citizen-class in the Middle Ages. The authorities were forced to succumb to a populace supported by six or seven thousand vine-dressers, who had burned all the archives and the tax-offices, and who went from street to street, dragging about an excise officer of the octroi, saying at each lamp-chain, "This is the place to hang him."—The unhappy man was delivered from these wretches by the National Guard, who saved his life by taking him to prison on the pretext of trying him. The General of the forces only got in by coming to terms with the vine-dressers, and it needed some courage to walk through the mob; for as soon as he appeared outside the town hall a man of the Roman suburb put his pruning scythe—a large curved knife at the end of a pole used for lopping trees—round his neck, crying out, "No more tax-gatherers, or we yield nothing." And the laborer would have pruned off the head of a man whom sixteen years of fighting had spared, but for the prompt intervention of one of the leaders of the rebellion, who obtained a promise that the Chambers should be asked to suppress the "cellar-rats"—or excise men.

In the fourteenth century Issoudun could still boast of seventeen thousand inhabitants, the remnant of a population of nearly double that number in Rigord's time. Charles

VII. had a residence there; it still exists, and was known as the *Maison du roy* so late as the eighteenth century. This town, at that time the central mart of the wool-trade, supplied the greater part of Europe with the raw material, besides manufacturing it on a large scale into cloth, hats, and excellent gloves, called *Chevreautin*. In the time of Louis Fourteen, Issoudun, the birthplace of Baron and of Bourdaloue, was always mentioned as a home of elegance, pure French, and good society. Poupart, the priest, in his "History of Sancerre," speaks of the inhabitants of Issoudun as remarkable among all the natives of le Berry for their acumen and mother-wit.

At the present day this brilliancy and wit have totally disappeared. Issoudun, though its wide extent bears witness to its former importance, claims but twelve thousand souls, including the vine-dressers of four extensive suburbs —Saint-Paterne, Vilatte, Rome, and les Alouettes, little towns in themselves. The inhabitants, like those of Versailles, have elbow-room in the streets. Issoudun still is the centre of the wool-trade of le Berry, a business now in danger from the improvements which are being generally introduced in the breed of sheep which the Berrichon will not adopt. The vineyards of Issoudun yield a wine which is consumed in two departments; and which, if it were only made as wine is made in Burgundy and Gascony, would be one of the best vintages in France. But, alas! "We do as our fathers did!"—that is the law of the land. So the vine-growers leave the stalks in the liquor during fermentation, which ruins the flavor of a wine that might be the source of renewed wealth, and an opening for the industry of the district. Thanks to the roughness communicated to the wine by the wood, and which is said to diminish with age, it may be kept for a century! This reason, assigned by the vine-grower, is important enough to the science of the manufacture to be recorded here; Guillaume le Breton has, in fact, celebrated this property in a few lines in his "Philippide."

Thus the decay of Issoudun is accounted for by its per-

verse stagnation carried to imbecility, as one single fact will show. When the direct road was contemplated from Paris to Toulouse, it was obvious that it should run from Vierzon to Châteauroux, past Issoudun. This is shorter than the line actually taken by Vatan. But the bigwigs of the town, and the Municipal Council of Issoudun—which, it is said, still sits—petitioned for its passing through Vatan; objecting that if their town lay on the highroad, the price of provisions would rise, and they might be obliged to pay thirty sous for a fowl.

No analogous act is recorded of any land but the wildest districts of Sardinia, a country formerly so populous and rich, and now so deserted. When King Charles Albert, with a laudable intent to civilize the land, proposed to connect Sassari, the second town in the island, with Cagliari, by a fine and magnificent highroad, the only road existing in this wild savanna, the direct line was planned to pass Bonorva, a district inhabited by a refractory race very like our subject Arab tribes, and, in fact, descended from the Moors. When they saw themselves within an ace of being caught by civilization, the savages of Bonorva, without taking the trouble to discuss the matter, signified their opposition to the plan. The Government disregarded this announcement. The first engineer who attempted to take a bee-line had a bullet in his brain, and died by his stake. No questions were asked; but the road made a bend that lengthens it by eight leagues.

At Issoudun the increasingly low price of the wine, all consumed on the spot, while gratifying the citizen's wish to live cheaply, is bringing about the ruin of the wine-growers, who are more and more oppressed by the cost of cultivation and the excise; in the same way, ruin threatens the wool-trade of the district, in consequence of the impossibility of improving the breed of sheep. The country folks have a rooted horror of every kind of change, even of that which may serve their interests.

A traveller from Paris found a laborer in the country

who was dining off an enormous quantity of bread, cheese, and vegetables. He proved to him that by substituting a certain proportion of meat he would be nourished better and cheaper, he would do more work, and waste his capital of strength more slowly. The man of Berry admitted the accuracy of the calculation.—"But only consider the jaw, sir," said he.—"The jaw?"—"Why, yes, sir; how people would tattle!"

"He would have been the talk of the district," said the owner of the land on which the incident occurred. "They would think he was as rich as a townsman. In short, he is afraid of public opinion, of being pointed at, of being supposed to be ailing or ill.—That is what we all are in this part of the world."

Country-town folk often echo these last words with a feeling of covert pride.

And while ignorance and routine are insuperable in the country, where the peasantry are left to themselves, Issoudun, as a town, has settled into absolute social stagnation. Being obliged to make head against waning fortunes by sordid economy, each family lives for itself alone. Again, the society there is now forever bereft of the contrast that gives distinction to manners. The town is no longer the scene of that antagonism of two classes which gave vitality to the Italian states in the Middle Ages. Issoudun has no men of birth. The Cottereaux, the Routiers, the Jacquerie, the religious wars, and the Revolution have completely exterminated the nobility. The town is very proud of this triumph. To keep down the cost of living, Issoudun has persistently refused to be made a garrison town; thus it has lost that means of intercourse with the times, besides losing the profit that is derived from the presence of the military.

Until 1756 Issoudun was one of the gayest of garrison towns. A judicial drama, which was the talk of France at that time, deprived the town of its soldiery; the case of the Lieutenant-General of the district against the Marquis de Chapt, whose son, a dragoon officer, was put to

death, justly perhaps, but traitorously, for some amorous misdemeanor.

The occupation by the 44th half-brigade, forced upon it during the civil war, was not such as to reconcile the inhabitants to the soldier tribe.

Bourges, of which the population is annually diminishing, is a victim to the same social atrophy. Vitality is failing in these large bodies. The State is no doubt to blame. It is the duty of a Government to detect such sores in the body politic, and to remedy them by sending men of energy to the affected spots to change the state of things. Alas! far from this, such fatal and funereal peacefulness is a source of satisfaction! Besides, how is it possible to send fresh chiefs or capable judges? Who nowadays would care to be buried in a district where he can earn no credit for the good to be done? If by chance an ambitious outsider is appointed to such a place, he is soon swamped by the power of inertia, and tunes himself to the pitch of the dreadful provincial life. Issoudun would have benumbed Napoleon.

As a result of this state of things, the district of Issoudun, in 1822, was under the administration of men all natives of le Berry. Government authority was therefore *nil* or impotent, excepting in those cases, of course very rare, of which the evident importance demands the intervention of the law. Monsieur Mouilleron, the public prosecutor, was related to everybody, and his deputy belonged to a family in the town. The President of the Criminal Court, before he had risen to such dignity, had made himself famous by one of those speeches which, in the provinces, crown a man with a fool's cap for the rest of his life. At the end of a case for the prosecution which would entail capital punishment, he said to the prisoner: "My poor Pierre, the case is clear; you will have your head cut off. Let that be a lesson to you." The superintendent of police, who had held the post ever since the Restoration, had relations all over the district.

Finally, not only had religion no influence whatever, but the curé was not respected. The townsfolk—Liberals, back-

biters, and ignorant—repeated more or less absurd stories about the poor man's conduct to his housekeeper. The children went to his catechising all the same, and were admitted to their first Communion; all the same, there was a school; Mass was said and festivals were kept; the taxes were paid, the only thing Paris requires of the provinces; and the Maire passed resolutions; but all these acts of social life were mere matters of routine. Thus the flabbiness of official life was in admirable harmony with the moral and intellectual condition of the place. The sequel of this narrative will show the results of a state of things less exceptional than might be supposed. Many towns in France, especially in the south, are very like Issoudun. And the state to which the triumph of the middle class had brought this town—the chief town of its district (or *arrondissement*)—awaits all France, and even Paris, if the citizen class continues to be master of the home and foreign policy of our country.

Now a word as to the topography of Issoudun. The town extends north and south on a hillside that curves toward the Chateauroux road. At the foot of the slope a canal was constructed, at the time when the place was prosperous, to supply the factories, or to flood the trenches below the ramparts; it is known as *la Rivière forcée*, the Borrowed Stream, its waters being diverted from the Théols. The borrowed stream forms an artificial branch, returning to the natural river below the Roman suburb at a point where it is met by the Tournemine and some other affluents. These little brooks of rushing water irrigate meadows of some extent, which lie on all sides below the yellow or white hills closely dotted with black specks, for such is the aspect of the vine-land of Issoudun during seven months of the year. The vine-dressers layer the vines every year, and leave nothing but a hideous stump, without any prop, at the bottom of a funnel of earth. Thus, on arriving from Vierzon, Vatan, or Chateauroux, the eye, wearied by the monotonous plain, is agreeably surprised by the appearance of the meadowland of Issoudun, the oasis of this part of the country, supplying vegetables for ten

leagues round. Below the suburb of Rome stretches one vast market-garden exclusively devoted to kitchen produce, and divided into the Upper and Lower Baltan.

A broad, long avenue, with sidewalks planted with poplars, leads from the town, across the fields, to an ancient convent called Frapesle, where an English garden—unique in the district—bears the high-sounding name of Tivoli. Here, on Sundays, fond couples wander to breathe their confidences.

Traces of the former splendor of Issoudun can, of course, be discerned by an attentive observer, and the most conspicuous are the divisions of the town. The castle, which of old was a town of itself, with its walls and moats, constitutes a distinct quarter even now, entered only through the old gates, or quitted by three bridges over the arms of the two rivers; this alone has the aspect of an old town. The walls still show their formidable masonry, here and there crowned with houses. Above the castle rises the tower which was the citadel. The conqueror of the town lying round these two fortified strongholds had still to take both the tower and the castle. Nor did the mastery of the castle secure that of the tower. The suburb of Saint-Paterne beyond the tower, shaped like a palette, and encroaching on the fields, is so large that it must in early ages have been the original township. Since the Middle Ages, Issoudun, like Paris, has climbed the hill and spread outside the tower and the castle.

In 1822 this notion still derived some certainty from the existence of the beautiful Church of Saint-Paterne, only recently pulled down by the son of the man who purchased it from the nation. This building, one of the prettiest examples of Romanesque Church architecture in France, was destroyed without any one having drawn the porch front, which was in perfect preservation. The only voice that was raised to save the building found no echo, neither in the town nor in the department.

Though the castle precincts of Issoudun have all the char-

acter of an old place, with its narrow streets and ancient houses, the town, properly so called, which was taken and burned again and again at different periods, and especially during the Fronde, when it was burned to the ground, has now a modern aspect. Broad streets, as compared with the other quarters, and well-built houses form a contrast with the ancient castle, striking enough to have earned Issoudun, in some geographies, the epithet of *pretty*.

In a town thus constituted, devoid even of commercial activity, of taste for the arts, of scientific interest, where every one sits at home, it could not but happen—and it did in fact happen—that at the time of the Restoration, in 1816, when the war was over, many of the young men of the place had no career before them, and did not know what to do with themselves pending their marriage, or their coming into their parents' money. Bored to death at home, these young people found no means of diversion in the town; and since, as the proverb has it, young men must sow their wild oats, they performed the operation at the expense of the town itself. It was difficult to do much by broad daylight; they would have been recognized, and, the cup of their misdemeanors once full, they would at their first serious offence have found themselves in the hands of the police; so they very judiciously preferred to play their mischievous pranks at night. And thus, among these old ruins left by so many departed phases of civilization, a vestige of the farcical spirit that characterized the manners of the past flashed like a dying flame. These young men took their pleasure as Charles IX. and his courtiers, or Henry V. and his companions, were wont to take theirs, in a form of amusement common of old in many provincial towns.

Having become confederates by their need of mutual help and defence, and the desire to invent practical jokes, the friction of wits developed among them a pitch of mischievousness which is natural to the young, and may be noticed even in animals. Their confederacy gave them also the little enjoyment that comes of the mystery of a standing con-

spiracy. They called themselves "The Knights of Idlesse." All through the day these young monkeys were little saints; they affected excessive quietude; besides they slept late in the mornings after nights when they had carried out some cruel trick. The Knights of Idlesse began by common practical jokes, such as unhooking and changing shop-signs, ringing at doors, hurling a cask left outside a door into a neighbor's cellar with a prodigious clatter, and waking the folks by a noise like the explosion of a mine. At Issoudun, as in many places, the way into the cellars is through a trap-door close to the entrance from the street, closed by a huge lid with hinges, and fastened with a heavy padlock. These Bad Boys, at the end of 1816, had not got beyond the practical jokes played everywhere by young men and lads. But in January, 1817, the Order of Idlesse had a Grand Master, and distinguished itself by certain pranks which until 1823 were the terror of Issoudun, or, at any rate, kept the citizens and craftsmen in perpetual alarms.

This leader was one Maxence Gilet, called Max for short; and his antecedents, no less than his strength and youth, destined him for the part. Maxence Gilet was supposed to be the natural son of Lousteau, Madame Hochon's brother, the sub-delegate whose gallantries had left many memorials, and who had incurred, as we know, Doctor Rouget's hatred *à propos* to Agathe's birth. But before this quarrel the friendship between the two men had been so close that, to use a phrase of the country and period, where one went the other would go. So it was always said that Max might just as well be the doctor's son as Lousteau's; but he belonged to neither of them, for his father was a handsome young dragoon officer in garrison at Bourges. However, as a consequence of their intimacy, happily for the boy, the two men were always disputing for the paternity.

Max's mother, the wife of a clog-maker in the Roman suburb, was for her soul's destruction amazingly beautiful, with the beauty of a true Trasteverina, the only thing she had to bequeath to her boy. Madame Gilet, before Max's

birth in 1788, had long pined for this boon from heaven, which was maliciously ascribed to the gallantries of the two men—no doubt to set them at loggerheads. Gilet, a hardened old sot, winked at his wife's misconduct by such collusion and tolerance as are not exceptional in the lowest class. The woman herself, hoping to secure their protection for the child, took good care not to enlighten the supposed fathers. In Paris she would have been a millionnaire; at Issoudun she sometimes was well off, sometimes wretchedly poor, and at last scorned by all.

Madame Hochon, Monsieur Lousteau's sister, paid about ten crowns a year toward Max's schooling. This liberality, which Madame Hochon could not allow herself in consequence of her husband's avarice, was naturally attributed to her brother, then living at Sancerre. When Doctor Rouget, whose son was not a success, observed how handsome Max was, he paid the school expenses of the "young rascal," as he called him, till 1805. As Lousteau had died in 1800; and the doctor seemed to gratify a feeling of pride by paying the boy's schooling for five years, the question of paternity remained unsettled.

Indeed, Maxence Gilet, the cause of many jests, was soon forgotten. And this is his story. In 1806, a year after Doctor Rouget's death, the boy, who seemed born to a life of adventure, and who was indeed gifted with extraordinary strength and agility, had committed a number of more or less rash acts of mischief. He and Monsieur Hochon's grandsons were already in league to drive the tradesfolk to frenzy; he gathered all the neighbors' fruit before the owners, making nothing of scaling a wall. This imp had no match in athletic exercises; he played prisoner's base to perfection; he could have coursed and caught a hare. He had an eye worthy of Leather-Stocking, and had a passion for sport. Instead of doing his lessons, he passed all his time in shooting at a mark. He spent all the money he could extract from the old doctor in buying powder and shot for a worn-out pistol given to him by Gilet the clog-maker. Now, in the autumn of 1806, Max,

by this time seventeen, committed an involuntary murder one evening at nightfall by coming upon a young woman in her garden, where he was stealing fruit, and frightening her into a miscarriage. Being threatened by the clog-maker with the guillotine—the old man no doubt wanted to be rid of him—Max ran off, and never stopped till he reached Bourges, joined a regiment on the march to Spain, and there enlisted. No further notice was taken of the young woman's death.

A lad of Max's disposition was certain to distinguish himself; and he did so, with such effect that, after three campaigns, he returned as a captain, for the little learning he had picked up had served him well. In 1809, in Portugal, he was left for dead on an English battery which his company had taken, but could not hold. Max, a prisoner, was sent by the English to the Spanish hulks at Cabrera, the worst of all.

An application was indeed made on his behalf to the Emperor for the Cross of the Legion of Honor and the rank of Major, but Napoleon was just then in Austria; he kept all his favors for the dashing actions that were done under his own eye; he had no liking for men who were taken prisoners, and was not best pleased with the state of affairs in Portugal.

Max was left on the hulks from 1810 to 1814. In the course of those four years he was utterly demoralized; for the hulks were the galleys *minus* the crime and disgrace. In the first place, to secure his own freedom of action and defend himself against the corruption that was rampant in those foul prisons, unworthy of any civilized nation, the handsome young captain killed in duels—for duels were fought on a space six yards square—seven bullies and tyrants of whom he rid his ship, to the great joy of their victims. Max reigned in the hulk, thanks to the prodigious skill he acquired in handling his weapons, to his personal strength and cleverness. But he, in his turn, committed some arbitrary acts, and had adherents who took his part and became his flatterers. In this school of misery, where imbittered nature dreamed only of revenge, and where the sophistries hatched in these seething brains found a warrant

for every evil purpose, Max became utterly depraved. He listened to the counsel of those who aimed at fortune at any price, and did not shrink from criminal deeds so long as they could be committed without proof.

At last, at the peace, he was released, perverted though guiltless, capable of becoming a great politician in public life, or a scoundrel in private life, as circumstances might direct.

On his return to Issoudun he heard of the deplorable end of his parents. Like all people who give way to their passions, and lead, as the saying goes, a short life and a merry one, the Gilets had died in hospital in the most dire poverty. Almost immediately after the news of Napoleon's landing at Cannes ran through France, Max thought he could not do better than go to Paris and ask for his Cross and his promotion. The Marshal who was then at the head of the War Office remembered Captain Gilet's brave conduct in Portugal; he gave him his commission with the rank of Major of Infantry; but he could not obtain the Cross for him. "The Emperor says you will be sure to win it in the first fight," said the Marshal. And, in fact, the Emperor put down the brave Captain's name for that honor after the battle of Fleurus, where Gilet distinguished himself. After the battle of Waterloo, Gilet retired with the army on the Loire. When the revision took place, Marshal Feltre would grant him neither his promotion nor his Cross.

Napoleon's soldier came home to Issoudun in a state of exasperation that may be easily imagined; he refused to serve at all without his Cross and the rank of Major. The authorities thought this a monstrous demand from a young man of five-and-twenty, who at that rate might be a Colonel at thirty. So Max sent in his papers. Thus the Major—for the Bonapartists recognized among themselves the promotions conferred in 1815—lost the pittance designated as half-pay that was doled out to the officers of the army of the Loire. At the sight of this handsome young fellow, whose whole possessions were twenty napoleons, Issoudun bestirred

itself in his favor, and the Maire gave him a place in his office with a salary of six hundred francs. Max, after holding this appointment for about six months, retired of his own accord, and was succeeded by a captain named Carpentier, who, like himself, had remained faithful to Napoleon.

Gilet, already Grand Master of the Knights of Idlesse, had entered on a life which lost him the regard of the best families in the town; not that they said anything to him, for he was violent, and dreaded by everybody, even by those officers of the old army who had, like him, refused to serve, and had come home to plant cabbages in le Berry.

The small affection felt for the Bourbons by the good folks of Issoudun is not surprising after what has here been said. And, in proportion to its size, there were more Bonapartists in this little town than anywhere else. As is well known, almost all the Bonapartists became Liberals. At Issoudun, or in the neighborhood, there were perhaps a dozen officers in the same position as Maxence, who liked him so well as to regard him as their chief; with the sole exception of Carpentier, his successor, and of a certain Monsieur Mignonnet, ex-captain of the Artillery of the Guard. Carpentier, a cavalry officer, who had risen from the ranks, very soon married, thus allying himself with one of the most important families in the town—that of Borniche-Hérau. Mignonnet, a student of the Ecole Polytechnique, had belonged to a corps which fancies itself superior to all others. There were in the Imperial armies two tones of feeling among the military. A strong party had an immense contempt for the mere citizen, the *péquin*, the plain-clothes-man, such as the noble felt for the villein, the conquering race for the conquered. These were not over-strict in observing the code of honor in their intercourse with civilians, and a man who had cut down a bourgeois was not too severely blamed. The others, and among them the artillery, as a result perhaps of its republicanism, did not adopt this

view, which tended indeed to divide France into two parts —Military France and Civilian France. Hence, though Major Potel and Captain Renard, two officers living in the Roman quarter, whose views as to civilians never varied, were Maxence Gilet's friends through thick and thin, Major Mignonnet and Captain Carpentier sided with the townsfolk in regarding Max's conduct as unworthy of an "officer and a gentleman."

Major Mignonnet, a little dry man of much dignity, gave his mind to the problems which the steam-engine seemed likely to solve, and lived very simply in the quiet society of Monsieur and Madame Carpentier. His gentle manners and scientific pursuits gained him the consideration of the whole town. And it was currently said that these two gentlemen were *a very different sort* from Major Potel and Captain Renard, Maxence, and the rest who frequented the Café Militaire and kept up the rough manners and traditions of the Empire.

Thus, at the time when Madame Bridau revisited Issoudun, Max was an outlaw from the citizen world. The young fellow indeed so far sentenced himself that he never intruded himself on the circle known as the club, and did not complain of the reprobation of which he was the object, though he was the youngest, and smartest, and best-dressed man in Issoudun, spent a good deal of money, and even had a horse —a creature as strange at Issoudun as Lord Byron's was at Venice.

It will presently be seen how it had come to pass that Maxence, poor and unholpen, had been enabled to become the man of fashion of Issoudun; for these disgraceful means, which earned him the contempt of timid or pious persons, were linked with the interests which had brought Agathe and Joseph from Paris. To judge from his braggart bearing and the expression of his countenance, Max cared little enough for public opinion; he no doubt counted on being revenged some day, and reigning over those who now scorned him.

Besides, though the better class might misprize him, the admiration his character commanded among the populace was a counterpoise to that opinion; his courage, his fine appearance, his decisiveness, delighted the mob; but, indeed, his depravity was not known to them, nor was its extent suspected even by the townsfolk.

Max, at Issoudun, played a part very similar to that of the Armorer in "The Fair Maid of Perth"; he was the champion of Bonaparte and the Opposition. He was looked to on great occasions as the good men of Perth looked to Smith. A fray gave the hero and the victim of the hundred days his opportunity.

In 1819 a battalion commanded by some Royalist officers, lads just out of Maison Rouge, marched through Issoudun on their way to relieve the garrison at Bourges. Not knowing what to do in such a constitutional town, the officers went to pass the time at the Café Militaire. There is such a resort for soldiers in every provincial town. That of Issoudun, standing in a corner of the parade-ground under the walls, and kept by the widow of an officer, naturally served as a sort of club for the Bonapartists of the place, half-pay officers and others who were of Max's way of thinking, and who were allowed, by the feeling of the town, to display their adoration of the Emperor. After 1816 a banquet was held at Issoudun every year to celebrate the anniversary of Napoleon's coronation.

The first three Royalists who dropped in asked for newspapers, naming, among others, the "Quotidienne" and the "Drapeau blanc." But the opinions of the town, and especially of the Café Militaire, did not encourage Royalist newspapers. The Café could only produce the "Commerce," the name assumed for a few years by the "Constitutionnel" when that paper was suppressed by law. But since, in the first number published under that title, its leader opened with these words, "The 'Commerce' is essentially constitutional in its views," it was still familiarly called the "Constitutionnel." Every subscriber at once saw the joke which

bid them pay no attention to the name over the door; the wine would be of the old tap.

The stout mistress perched at her desk told the Royalists that she had not the papers they asked for.

"What papers do you take, then?" said one of the officers, a captain.

The waiter, a small youth in a blue cloth jacket and a coarse linen apron, produced the "Commerce."

"Oh! so that is your paper! Have you no other?"

"No," said the waiter, "that is the only one."

The Captain tore the hostile sheet into fragments, threw it on the floor, and spat upon it, saying, "Bring the dominoes!"

Within ten minutes news of the insult offered to the Constitutional Opposition and Liberalism generally in the person of the sacrosanct paper, which waged war on the priesthood with the courage and wit we all know, was flying along the streets and flashing like light into every house; every one was telling the tale. The same sentence rose to every lip: "Run and tell Max!"

Max was soon informed. The officers had not finished their game of dominoes when Max, accompanied by Major Potel and Captain Renard, entered the Café; while a following of thirty young fellows, eager to see the end of the matter, remained, for the most part, outside in groups on the Parade. The Café soon was full.

"Waiter, bring me my paper," said Max very quietly. Then a little comedy was played. The stout woman said in a timid and conciliatory tone—

"I have lent it, Captain."

"Go and fetch it!" cried one of Max's companions.

"Cannot you do without the paper?" said the waiter. "We have not got it."

The young officers were laughing and stealing side glances at the town party.

"It is torn up!" exclaimed a young Bonapartist, looking at the Captain's feet.

"Who has dared to tear up the newspaper?" asked Max in a voice of thunder, his eyes flashing, and his arms crossed as he rose.

"And we have spit upon it too," replied the three Royalists, rising and facing Max.

"You have insulted the whole town!" said Max, turning pale.

"Well, what of that?" said the youngest of the three.

With a neatness, a boldness, and a swiftness which the young men could not guard against, Max dealt two slaps to the foremost man as they stood, saying—

"Do you understand French?"

They went out to fight in the Allée de Frapesle, three against three. Potel and Renard would not hear of allowing Max to fight it out alone with the Royalists. Max killed his man; Potel wounded his so severely that the unhappy lad, a man of good birth, died next day in the hospital, whither they carried him. As for the third, he got off with a sword-cut, and wounded Captain Renard, his opponent. The battalion went on to Bourges that night. This affair, much talked about in the country, crowned Maxence Gilet as a hero.

The Knights of Idlesse, all young—the eldest was not five-and-twenty—admired Maxence. Some of them, far from sharing the rigid prudery of their families with regard to Max, envied him greatly, and thought him a very fortunate man. Under such a leader the Order did wonders. From the month of January, 1817, not a week passed but the town was in a pother over some fresh prank. Max, as a point of honor, imposed certain conditions on the Knights; by-laws were drawn up. These young devils became as prompt as disciples of Amoros, as tough as kites, skilled in every kind of exercise, as strong and as dexterous as malefactors. They were adepts in the business of creeping over roofs, scaling house-walls, jumping and walking without a sound, spreading mortar, and building up doors. They had an arsenal of ladders, ropes, tools, and disguises.

The Knights of Idlesse, in short, achieved the very ideal of ingenious mischief, not only in the execution, but in the invention of the tricks they played. They were at last inspired by that genius of malignity in which Panurge took such delight, which provokes every one to laugh, and makes the victim so ridiculous that he dare not complain. The men, all respectably connected, had, of course, means of information in private houses which enabled them to obtain such intelligence as could serve them in the perpetration of their rascality.

One very cold night these demons incarnate carried a large stove out into the courtyard of a house, and stoked it so effectually that the fire lasted till morning. Then it was rumored in the town that Monsieur So-and-so (a noted miser!) had been trying to warm his yard.

Sometimes they lay in ambush in the High Street, or the Rue Basse, the two arteries, as it were, of the town, into which run a great number of smaller cross streets. Squatting, each at the corner of a side street, under the wall, putting their heads out when every household was in its first sleep, they would shout in a tone of terror from one end of the town to the other:

"What is the matter? Oh, what is the matter?" The repeated question would rouse the citizens, who soon appeared in their shirts and night-caps, candle in hand, catechising each other, and holding the strangest colloquies with the most bewildered faces ever seen.

There was a poor bookbinder, very old, who believed in demons. Like most provincial artisans, he worked in a little low shop. The Knights, disguised as devils, invaded his shop at night, put him into his waste-paper box, and left him shrieking like three men at the stake. The poor man roused all the neighbors, to whom he related these apparitions of Lucifer, and the neighbors could never undeceive him. The binder very nearly went mad.

In the depth of a severe winter the confederates demolished the chimney-pot of the tax-collector, and replaced it

in the course of the night; it was exactly the same; they made no noise, and left not the slightest trace of their work. The chimney was, however, so arranged inside as to fill the room with smoke. The tax-collector endured this for two months before discovering why his chimney, which had always worked properly and given him perfect satisfaction, should play such tricks; and he had to reconstruct it.

One day they stuffed trusses of straw sprinkled with sulphur, and greasy paper into the chimney of an old bigot, a friend of Madame Hochon's. Next morning, on lighting her fire, the poor old lady, a quiet, gentle creature, thought she had lighted a volcano. The firemen came, the whole town rushed in; and as there were among the firemen some of the Knights of Idlesse, they deluged the poor soul's house, and put her in fear of drowning after the fear of fire. She fell ill of the shock.

When they wished to keep any one up all night, under arms and in mortal terror, they sent anonymous letters warning him of a plan to rob him; then they crept one by one under his wall or past his windows whistling signals to each other.

One of their most successful hoaxes, which amused the town hugely, and is talked of to this day, was sending to all the possible heirs of a very miserly old woman, who was expected to leave a large fortune, a few lines announcing her death, and inviting them to come punctually at a certain hour, when seals would be affixed. About eighty persons arrived from Vatan, Saint-Florent, Vierzon, and the neighborhood, all in deep mourning, but in very good spirits—men with their wives, widows with their sons, children with their parents, some in gigs, some in basket-carriages, some in old tax-carts. Imagine the scenes between the old lady's servant and the first-comers! Then the consultations at the lawyers!—It was like a riot in the town.

At last one day the Sous-préfet began to think this state of things intolerable, all the more so because it was impossible to ascertain who ventured to perpetrate these pleas-

antries. Suspicion, indeed, rested on the guilty youths; but as the National Guard was at that time a mere name at Issoudun, as there was no garrison, and as the lieutenant of police had not more than eight gendarmes at his command, and kept no patrol, it was impossible to obtain proofs. The Sous-préfet was at once placed on "the order of the night," to be treated as obnoxious. This functionary was in the habit of eating two new-laid eggs for breakfast. He kept fowls in his yard, and he crowned his mania for eating new-laid eggs by insisting on cooking them himself. Neither his wife, nor the maid, nor any one, according to him, could cook an egg as it ought to be done; he watched the clock, and boasted that in this particular he could beat all the world. For two years he had boiled his own eggs with a success that was the subject of much jesting. Then, every night for a month the eggs were taken from his hens and hard-boiled eggs put in their place. The poor man was at his wits' end, and lost his reputation as the egg-boiling Sous-préfet. Finally, he had something else for breakfast.

Still, he never suspected the Knights of Idlesse; the trick was too neatly done. Max hit on a plan for greasing his stovepipes every night with oil saturated with such vile odors that it was impossible to live in the house. Nor was this all; one morning his wife, wishing to attend mass, found her shawl stuck together inside by some glue so tenacious that she was obliged to go without it. The official begged to be transferred. His cowardice and submission established beyond question the occult and farcical sway of the Knights of Idlesse.

Between the Rue des Minimes and the Place Misère there existed at that time a part of the town inclosed between the Borrowed Stream at the bottom and the rampart above—the part extending from the Parade to the crockery market. This sort of misshapen square was occupied by wretched-looking houses, closely packed and divided by alleys so narrow that two persons could not walk abreast. This part of the town, a sort of Court of Miracles, was inhabited by

poor people, or such as carried on the least profitable trades, lodging in the hovels and wretched tenements expressively designated as *maison borgnes*—purblind houses. It was, no doubt, at all times a spot accursed, the den of evil livers, for one of these lanes is called Rue du Bourreau, or Hangman's Alley. It is certain that the town executioner had here his house, with its red door, for more than five centuries. The executioner's man lives there still, if public report may be believed, for the townspeople never see him. None but the vine-dressers keep up any communication with this mysterious personage, who inherits from his predecessors the gift of healing fractures and wounds. The women of the town held high festival here of old, when the place gave itself the airs of a capital. Here dwelt the dealers in second-hand articles, which never seem to find a buyer, old-clothes venders, with their malodorous display; in short, all the mongrel population that herds in some such corner of almost every town, under the dominion of one or two Jews.

At the corner of one of these dark passages, in the least dead-alive part of the suburb, there was, from 1815 till 1823, and perhaps even later, a beer-shop kept by a woman known as Mother Cognette. The beer-shop occupied a house not ill built of courses of white stone filled in with rubble and mortar, and consisting of one story and an attic. Over the door shone an immense branch of a fir-tree gleaming like Florentine bronze. As if this "bush" were not sufficiently explicit, the eye was caught by a blue board, fastened to the architrave, on which the words "Good March beer" were legible above a picture representing a soldier offering to a very lightly draped woman a jet of foam spouting from a jug into the glass she holds, and forming a curve like the arch of a bridge, the whole so gorgeously colored as to make Delacroix faint.

The ground-floor consisted of a large front room, serving both as kitchen and dining-room; the provisions needed for carrying on the business hung to hooks from the rafters. Behind this room a ladder-stair went up to the first floor;

but, at the foot of the stairs, was a door opening into a small narrow room, lighted from one of those provincial backyards which are more like a chimney, so narrow, dark, and high are they. This little room, screened by a lean-to, and hidden from all eyes by the surrounding walls, was the hall where the Bad Boys of Issoudun held their full court. Old Cognet ostensibly entertained the country people there on market days; in reality, he played host to the Knights of Idlesse.

This old Cognet, formerly a groom in some rich house, had married la Cognette, originally a cook in a good family. The suburb of Rome still uses a feminine form of the husband's name for the wife, in the Latin fashion, as in Italy and Poland. By combining their savings, Cognet and his wife had been able to buy this house and set up as tavern-keepers. La Cognette, a woman of about forty, tall and buxom, with a turn-up nose, an olive skin, hair as black as jet, brown eyes, round and bright, and an intelligent, merry face, had been chosen by Maxence Gilet to be the Léonarde of the Order for the sake of her good-humor and her talents as a cook. Cognet himself was about fifty-six, thick-set, submissive to his wife, and, to quote the joke she constantly repeated, he could not help seeing straight, for he was blind of one eye.

For seven years, from 1816 to 1823, neither husband nor wife ever let out a word as to what was done or plotted every night on their premises, and they were always very much attached to all the Knights. Their devotion was indeed perfect, but it may seem less admirable when we consider that their interest was a guarantee for their silence and affection. At whatever hour of the night the members of the Order came to la Cognette's, if they knocked in a particular way, Father Cognet, recognizing the signal, rose, lighted the fire and the candles, opened the door, and went to the cellar for wine laid in expressly for the Order, while his wife cooked them a first-rate supper, either before or after the exploits planned the night before, or during the day.

While Madame Bridau was on her way from Orleans to Issoudun, the Knights of Idlesse were preparing one of their most famous tricks. An old Spaniard, a prisoner of war, who, at the peace, had remained in France, where he carried on a small trade in seeds, had come to market early, and had left his empty cart at the foot of the tower. Maxence was the first to arrive at the meeting-place fixed for the evening under the tower, and was presently asked in a low voice, "What is doing to-night?"

"Old Fario's cart is out there," replied he. "I almost broke my nose against it. Let us get it up the knoll to the foot of the tower, and after that we will see."

When Richard built the tower of Issoudun, he founded it, as has been said, on the remains of a basilica which occupied the site of the Roman temple and the Celtic Dun. These ruins, each representing a long series of centuries, formed a large mound, full of the monuments of three ages. Thus Richard Cœur de Lion's tower stands on the top of a cone sloping equally steeply on all sides, and to be ascended only by zigzag paths. To represent its position in a few words, the tower may be compared to the Obelisk of Luxor on its base. The base of the tower of Issoudun, concealing so many archæological treasures as yet unknown, is above eighty feet high on the side next the town. In an hour the cart had been taken to pieces and hoisted bit by bit to the top of the hill at the foot of the tower, by means something like that of the soldiers who carried the guns up the pass of Saint-Bernard. The cart was put together again, and all traces of the operations so carefully effaced that it would seem to have been carried there by the devil, or by a stroke of a fairy's wand. After this great achievement, the Knights, being hungry and thirsty, made their way to la Cognette's, and were soon seated round the table in the low narrow room, laughing by anticipation at the face Fario would make when, at about ten o'clock in the morning, he should go to look for his cart.

The Knights, of course, did not play these antics every

night. The talents of Sganarelle, Mascarille, and Scapin rolled into one would not have been able to invent three hundred and sixty-five practical jokes a year. In the first place, circumstances were not always favorable: the moon was too bright, or their last prank had been too annoying to sober folks; or one or another would refuse his co-operation when some relation was the chosen victim. But, though the rascals did not meet every night at la Cognette's, they saw each other every day, and were companions in such lawful pleasures as hunting or the vintage in autumn, and skating in winter.

Among this group of a score of youths who thus protested against the social somnolence of the town, some were more especially intimate with Max than the others, or made him their idol. A man of this temper often infatuates those younger than himself. Now, Madame Hochon's two grandsons, François Hochon and Baruch Borniche, were his devotees. The two boys regarded Max as almost a cousin, accepting the views of the neighbors as to his left-handed relationship to the Lousteaus. Max was free with his loans of money denied them by their grandfather Hochon for their amusements; he took them out shooting, and gave them some training; in fact, his influence over them was paramount to that of home. They both were orphans, and, though of age, lived under the guardianship of their grandfather, in consequence of certain circumstances to be explained when the great Monsieur Hochon appears on the scene.

At this moment François and Baruch—we will call them by their Christian names to make the story clearer—were seated, one on the right hand, and one on the left of Max, at the middle of the supper-table, that was wretchedly lighted by the fuliginous glimmer of four dips, eight to the pound. The party, consisting of not more than eleven of the Knights, had drunk a dozen to fifteen bottles of various wines. Baruch, whose name suggests a survival of Calvinism at Issoudun, said to Max at the moment when the wine had set all

tongues wagging: "You are about to be threatened at the very centre—"

"What do you mean by that?" asked Max.

"Why, my grandmother has had a letter from Madame Bridau, her goddaughter, announcing her arrival on a visit with her son. My grandmother arranged two rooms yesterday for their reception."

"And what is that to me?" said Max, taking up his glass, emptying it at a gulp, and setting it down on the table with a comical flourish.

Max was now four-and-thirty. One of the candles stood near him, and cast its light on his martial countenance, illuminating his forehead, and showing off his fair complexion, his flashing eyes, and his hair crisply waved, and as black as jet. This hair stood up strongly and naturally, curling back from his brow and temples, and clearly marking the outline of growth which our grandfathers called the five points. Notwithstanding such a striking contrast of black and white, Max had a very sweet face, deriving its charm from its shape, much like that given by Raphael to his Virgins' faces, and from a finely-shaped mouth, on which a gentle smile was apt to linger, a set expression which Max had gradually adopted. The fine color that flushes the faces of the Berrichons added to his genial look, and when he laughed outright he displayed two-and-thirty teeth worthy to grace the mouth of a fine lady. He was tall and well proportioned, neither stout nor thin. His hands, kept with care, were white and not unshapely, but his feet were those of the Roman suburb, of a foot soldier under the Empire. He would have made a fine general of division; he had shoulders that would have been the fortune of a field-marshal, and a breast broad enough to display all the Orders of Europe. Intelligence gave purpose to all his movements. And then, attractive by nature, like almost all children of a passion, the noble blood of his real father came out in him.

"But do not you know, Max," cried a youth at the bot-

tom of the table, the son of a retired surgeon-major named Goddet, the best doctor in the town, "that Madame Hochon's goddaughter is Rouget's sister? And if she and her son the painter are coming here, it is no doubt to get back her share of the old man's fortune, and then good-by to your harvest!"

Max frowned. Then with a glance that went from face to face all round the table, he studied the effect on his companions of this address, and again he said, "What is that to me?"

"But," François began again, "it seems to me that if old Rouget were to alter his will, supposing he has made one in favor of la Rabouilleuse . . ."

Here Max cut his faithful follower short with these words:

"When, on my arrival here, I heard you mentioned as one of the cinq-Hochons (cinq-cochons = five pigs), as the pun on your name has it—and has had it these thirty years—I told the man who called you so to shut up, my dear François, and that so emphatically, that no one at Issoudun has ever repeated that idiotic jest, at any rate not in my presence! And this is the return you make: you make use of a name of contempt in speaking of a woman you know me to be attached to."

Never had Max said so much as to his intimacy with the woman of whom François had just spoken by the nickname commonly given to her in Issoudun. As a former prisoner on the hulks, Max had enough experience, and as Major in the Grenadier Guards he had learned enough of honor, to understand the origin of the contempt for him in the town. He had never allowed any one whatever to say a word to him with reference to Mademoiselle Flore Brazier, Jean-Jacques Rouget's servant-mistress, so vigorously designated by good Madame Hochon as a hussy. Moreover, Max was well known to be too touchy to be spoken to on the subject unless he began it, and he never had begun it. In short, it was too dangerous to incur Max's anger or displeasure for even his most intimate friends to banter him about la Rabouilleuse.

When something was once said of a connection between Max and this girl in the presence of Major Potel and of Captain Renard, the two officers with whom he lived on terms of equality, Potel had replied:

"If he is Jean-Jacques Rouget's half-brother, why should he not live with him?"

"And besides," added Renard, "the girl is a morsel for a king; supposing he loves her, where is the harm? Does not young Goddet pay court to Madame Fichet to make the daughter his wife as a reward for such a penance?"

After this well-merited lecture, François could not recover the thread of his ideas, and he was yet more at fault when Max gently added:

"Well, go on—"

"Certainly not!" cried François.

"You are angry for nothing, Max," said young Goddet. "Is it not an understood thing that here, at la Cognette's, we may all say what we please? Should we not all become the mortal foes of any one of us who remembered outside these walls anything that is said, thought, or done here? All the town speaks of Flore Brazier by the nickname of la Rabouilleuse; if François let it slip out by accident, is that a crime against the Order of Idlesse?"

"No," said Max, "only against our personal friendship.—But I thought better of it; I remembered we were in Idlesse. I told him to go on."

There was utter silence. The pause was so uncomfortable for all present that Max exclaimed: "I will go on for him" (sensation), "for all of you" (amazement), "and tell you what you are thinking" (great sensation). "You think that Flore, la Rabouilleuse, Flore Brazier, Daddy Rouget's housekeeper—for they call him *Père* Rouget!—an old bachelor, who will never have any children!—you think, I say, that this woman has supplied me with everything since I came to Issoudun. If I have three hundred francs a month to toss out of window; if I can treat you often as I am doing this evening, and have money to lend to you all, I must get

the cash out of Madame Brazier's purse? Well, then, by Heaven! Yes, and again yes.—Yes, Mademoiselle Brazier has taken deadly aim at the old man's fortune."

"From father to son she will have richly earned it," said Goddet in his corner.

"You believe," Max went on, after smiling at Goddet's remark, "that I have laid a plot to marry Flore after the old man's death, and that then his sister, and this son, of whom I never heard till this instant, will endanger my future prospects?"

"That's it," cried François.

"So we all think round this table," said Baruch.

"Well, be calm, my boys," replied Max; "forewarned is forearmed. Now, I speak to the Knights of Idlesse. If, to be rid of these Parisians, I need the support of the Order, will you lend me a hand? Oh, within the limits we have prescribed for our pranks," he quickly added, seeing a slight hesitancy. "Do you suppose I want to murder or poison them?—Thank God, I am not a fool! And supposing, after all, that the Bridaus should win the day, and Flore should get no more than she has, I should be satisfied with that, do you hear? I like her well enough to prefer her to Mademoiselle Fichet, if Mademoiselle Fichet would have anything to say to me!"

Mademoiselle Fichet was the richest heiress of Issoudun; and the daughter's hand formed a large item in young Goddet's passion for her mother.

Plain speaking is so precious that the eleven Knights rose as one man.

"You are of the right sort, Max!"

"That is something like, Max. We will be the Knights of Salvation."

"Down with the Bridaus!"

"We will bridle the Bridaus!"

"After all, a sweetheart has been known to have three husbands!"

"Deuce take it, old Lousteau was fond of Madame Rouget,

and there is less harm in courting a housekeeper free and unfettered!"

"And if old Rouget was Max's father more or less, it is all in the family!"

"Opinions are free!"

"Hurrah for Max!"

"Down with cant!"

"Let us drink the fair Flore's health!"

Such were the eleven answers, acclamations, or toasts that broke from the eleven Knights of Idlesse, the outcome, it must be owned, of their very low standard of morality. We see now what Max's object had been in establishing himself as Grand Master of the Order. While inventing practical jokes, and making himself agreeable to the youth of the principal families, Max hoped to secure their suffrages in the day of his rehabilitation. He rose with a grace, lifted his glassful of Bordeaux, and all awaited his next speech.

"For all the ill I wish you, I only hope you may all get wives to compare with the fair Flore! As to the incursion of relations, for the present I am not alarmed; and later, we shall see!"

"We must not forget Fario's cart!"

"Oh, that is safe enough, by Jove!" said Goddet.

"I will see to the fitting conclusion of that joke," cried Max. "Be early at the market, and come and let me know when the old fellow comes to look for his cart."

The clocks were striking half-past three in the morning; the Knights went away in silence to find their way home, hugging the wall, and not making a sound, all being shod with list shoes.

Max slowly walked up to the Place Saint-Jean in the upper part of the town, between the Porte Saint-Jean and the Porte Villate, the rich citizens' quarter. Major Gilet had dissembled his fears, but this news had hit him hard. Since his stay above or below decks he had acquired a power of dissimulation as great and deep as his depravement. In the first place, and above all, the forty thousand francs a year

in land owned by Rouget was the whole of Gilet's passion for Flore Brazier, of that you may be sure! It may easily be seen from his mode of conduct what confidence she had led him to feel in her future fortune, as based on the old bachelor's affection. At the same time, the news that the legitimate heirs were on their way was enough to shake Max's faith in Flore's influence. The savings of the last seventeen years still stood in Rouget's name. Now if the will, which Flore declared had long since been executed in her favor, should be revoked, these savings at any rate might be secured if they were invested in the name of Mademoiselle Brazier.

"In all these seven years that idiot of a girl has never spoken a word about nephews and a sister!" said Max to himself, as he turned out the Rue Marmouse into the Rue l'Avenier. "Seven hundred and fifty thousand francs in the hands of ten or twelve different notaries, at Bourges, Vierzon, and Châteauroux, cannot be drawn out or invested in State securities within a week without its being known in a land of 'jaw.' To begin with, we must pack off the relations; but once quit of them, we must make haste and secure that fortune. Well, I must think it over."

Max was tired. He went into Rouget's house with a latch-key, and crept noiselessly to bed, saying to himself, "To-morrow my ideas will be clearer."

It will not be useless here to explain whence the Sultana of the Place Saint-Jean had obtained the nickname of la Rabouilleuse, and how she had gained the command of the Rouget establishment.

As he had advanced in years, the old doctor, father of Jean-Jacques and of Madame Bridau, had become aware of his son's utter stupidity. He then held him very tight, trying to force him into habits which would take the place of wisdom; but by this means, without knowing it, he was preparing him to be tame under the first tyrant that might succeed in getting the halter round his neck. One day, as he rode

home from his rounds, the wily and vicious old man saw a lovely little girl on the skirt of the water-meadow by the avenue to Tivoli. On hearing the horse, the child rose up from the bottom of one of the channels, which, seen from the height of Issoudun, look like silver ribbons on a green dress. Starting up like a naiad, the girl displayed to the doctor one of the sweetest virgin heads that ever painter dreamed of. Old Rouget, who knew the whole neighborhood, did not know this miracle of beauty. The child, almost naked, wore a tattered and scanty petticoat full of holes, and made of cheap woollen stuff, striped brown and white. A sheet of paper, fastened down by an osier withe, served her for a hat. Under this paper, scrawled over with strokes and O's, fully justifying its name of scribbling paper, was gathered up the most beautiful golden hair that any daughter of Eve could desire, fastened in a twist with a horse's curry-comb. Her pretty sunburned bosom, scarcely covered by the rags of a handkerchief that had once been a bandanna, showed its whiteness below the sunburn. The petticoat, pulled through between the legs and fastened by a coarse pin, looked a good deal like a swimmer's bathing drawers. Her feet and legs, visible through the clear water, were characterized by a slenderness worthy of the sculptors of the Middle Ages. This fair body, from exposure to the sun, had a rosy hue which was not ungraceful; the neck and bosom were worthy to be covered by a silken shawl. Finally, the nymph had blue eyes, shaded by lashes whose expression would have brought a painter or a poet to his knees. The doctor, enough of an anatomist to know a lovely figure, perceived that all the arts would be losers if this exquisite person were destroyed by field labor.

"Where do you come from, little one? I never saw you before," said the old doctor of sixty-two.

The scene took place in the month of September, 1799.

"I belong to Vatan," replied the girl.

On hearing a town accent, an ill-looking man, about two hundred yards away, standing in the upper waters of the stream, raised his head.

"Now, then, what are you at, Flore?" he called out. "Jabbering there instead of working; all the basketful will get off!"

"And what do you come here for from Vatan?" asked the doctor, not troubling himself about this interruption.

"I *rabouille* for my uncle Brazier there."

Rabouiller is a local word of le Berry, which perfectly describes the process it is meant to represent—the action of stirring the waters of a brooklet by beating them with a sort of large racket made of the branch of a tree. The crayfish, frightened by the commotion, of which they fail to see the purpose, hastily escape up stream, and in their agitation rush into the nets, which the poacher has placed at a proper distance. Flore Brazier held her racket, or *rabouilloir*, with the unconscious grace of innocence.

"But has your uncle got leave to fish for crayfish?"

"Well, and aren't we under the Republic one and indivisible?" shouted uncle Brazier from where he stood.

"We are under the Directory," said the doctor; "and I know of no law which will allow a man from Vatan to come and fish within the limits of the Commune of Issoudun." Then he said to Flore, "Is your mother living, child?"

"No, sir, and my father is in hospital at Bourges; he went mad after getting a sunstroke on his head in the fields—"

"How much do you earn?"

"Five sous a day all the season for crayfish—I goes to Braisne, ever so far, to beat the waters. Then in harvest-time, I gleans; and in winter, I spins."

"You are about twelve, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"Would you like to come with me? You shall be well fed, nicely dressed, have pretty shoes—"

"No, no. My niece has got to stay wi' me. I have her in charge before God and man," said uncle Brazier, who had come down to his niece and the doctor. "I am her guardian, I am."

The doctor preserved his gravity, suppressing a smile,

which would certainly have been too much for any one else at the sight of uncle Brazier. This "guardian" had on a peasant's broad hat, ruined by the sun and rain, riddled like a cabbage leaf on which many caterpillars have resided, and sewn up with white cotton. Under this hat was a dark hollow face, in which mouth, nose, and eyes were four darker spots. His worn jacket was like a piece of patchwork, and his trousers were of sacking.

"I am Doctor Rouget," said the physician; "and, since you are the child's guardian, bring her to my house, Place Saint-Jean; it will not be a bad day's work for you or for her either."

And without another word, feeling quite sure that he should see uncle Brazier in due course with the pretty Rabouilleuse, Doctor Rouget spurred his horse on the road to Issoudun. And, in fact, just as he was sitting down to dinner, his cook announced Citoyen and Citoyenne Brazier.

"Sit down," said the doctor to the uncle and niece.

Flore and her guardian, both barefoot, looked round the doctor's dining-room with eyes amazed; and this was why.

The house, inherited by Rouget from old Descoings, stands in the middle of one side of the Place Saint-Jean, a long and very narrow square planted with a few sickly-looking lime-trees. The houses here are better built than in any other part of the town, and Descoings' is one of the best. This house, facing Monsieur Hochon's, has three windows on the front toward the square, on the first floor, and below them a carriage gate into the courtyard, behind which the garden lies. Under the archway of this carriage gate is a door into a large room with two windows to the street. The kitchen is behind this room, but cut off by a staircase leading to the first floor and attics above. At an angle with the kitchen are a wood-house, a shed where the washing was done, stabling for two horses, and a coach-house; and above them are lofts for corn, hay, and oats, besides a room where the doctor's man-servant slept.

The room, so much admired by the little peasant girl and

her uncle, was decorated with carved wood in the style executed under Louis XV., and painted gray, and a handsome marble chimney-piece, above which Flore could see herself in a large glass reaching to the ceiling, and set in a carved and gilt frame. On the panels, at intervals, hung a few pictures, the spoil of the Abbeys of Déols, of Issoudun, of Saint-Gildas, of la Prée, of Chézal-Benoît, of Saint-Sulpice, and of the convents of Bourges and Issoudun, which had formerly been enriched by the liberality of kings and of the faithful with precious gifts and the finest works of the Renaissance. Thus, among the pictures preserved by Descoings and inherited by Rouget, there was a Holy Family by Albano, a Saint Jerome by Domenichino, a Head of Christ by Gian Bellini, a Virgin by Leonardo da Vinci, Christ bearing the Cross by Titian, from the Marchese di Belabre's collection—he who stood a siege and had his head cut off under Louis XIII.; a Lazarus by Veronese, a Marriage of the Virgin by the Priest of Genoa, two Church pictures by Rubens, and a copy from Perugino by Perugino himself, or by Raphael; finally, two Correggios and an Andrea del Sarto. The Descoings had chosen these from among three hundred, the spoils of churches, not in the least knowing their value, and selecting them solely for their better condition. Several had not merely magnificent frames, but were under glass. It was the beauty of the frames, and the value which the *panes* seemed to suggest, that had led to their choice.

Thus the furniture of the room was not devoid of the luxury so much prized in our days, though not at that time valued at Issoudun. The clock standing on the chimney-shelf between two superb silver chandeliers was distinguished by a solemn magnificence that betrayed the hand of Boule. The armchairs in carved wood, fitted with worsted-work done by devout ladies of rank, would be highly prized in these days, for they all bore coronets and coats of arms. Between the two windows stood a handsome console, brought from some chateau, and on it an enormous Chinese jar, in which the doctor kept his tobacco.

Neither Rouget, nor his son, nor the cook, nor the man-servant, took the least care of these treasures. They spit into a fireplace of beautiful workmanship, and the gilt moldings were variegated with verdigris. A pretty chandelier, partly of porcelain, was speckled, like the ceiling, with black spots, showing that the flies were at home there. The Descoings had hung the windows with brocade curtains, stripped from the bed of some Abbot. To the left of the door a cabinet worth some thousands of francs served as a sideboard.

"Now, Fanchette," said the doctor to his cook, "bring two glasses, and fetch us something good."

Fanchette, a sturdy country servant, who was regarded as superior even to la Cognette and the best cook in Issoudun, flew with an alacrity that testified to the doctor's despotic rule, and also to some curiosity on her part.

"What is an acre of vine-land worth in your parts?" said the doctor, pouring out a glass of wine for Brazier.

"A hundred crowns in hard cash."

"Well, leave your niece here as maid-servant; she shall have a hundred crowns for wages, and you, as her guardian, shall take the money—"

"Every year?" said Brazier, opening his eyes as large as saucers.

"I leave the matter to your conscience," replied the doctor. "She is an orphan. Till she is eighteen Flore will have none of the money."

"She is goin' on for twelve," said the uncle; "that makes it up to six acres of vine-land. But she is sweetly pretty, as mild as a lamb, very strong, very quick, very obedient. Poor creetur, she was the apple of his eye to my poor brother."

"And I will pay a year in advance," said the doctor.

"Lord A'mighty, make it two years, and us'll consider it settled. She will be better off with you than down at our place, for my wife whacks her, she can't abide her. There's only me that purtects her, poor dear little creetur—as innocent as a new-born babe!"

On hearing this speech, the doctor, struck by the word innocent, signed to uncle Brazier, and led him out into the courtyard, and from thence into the garden, leaving the little Rabouilleuse looking at the table between Fanchette and Jean-Jacques, who cross-questioned her, and to whom she artlessly related her meeting with the doctor.

"Well, honey, good-by," said uncle Brazier on his return, kissing Flore on the forehead. "You may thank me for a good job in leaving you with this kind and generous father of the poor. You've got to obey him like as you would me. Be a very good girl, and do what he tells you."

"Get the room over mine ready," said the doctor to Fanchette. "This little Flora, who is certainly well named, will sleep there from this evening. To-morrow we will send for a shoemaker and a needlewoman. Now, lay a place for her at once; she will keep us company."

That evening nothing was talked of in Issoudun but the introduction of a little "Rabouilleuse" into Doctor Rouget's household. The nickname stuck to Mademoiselle Brazier in this land of mocking spirits, before, during, and after her rise to fortune.

The doctor aimed, no doubt, at doing for Flore, in a small way, what Louis XV. did on a large scale for Mademoiselle de Romans; but he set to work too late. Louis XV. was still young, while the doctor was on the verge of old age.

From twelve years old to fourteen the charming peasant girl enjoyed unmixed happiness. Nicely dressed, in infinitely better clothes than the richest Miss in Issoudun, she had a gold watch and trinkets, given her by the doctor to encourage her in her studies, for she had a master to teach her reading, writing, and account-keeping. But the almost animal life led by the peasantry had given Flore such an aversion for the bitter cup of learning that the doctor got no further with her education.

His intentions with regard to this girl whom he was polishing, teaching, and training with a care that was all the more pathetic, because he had been supposed incapable of

tenderness, were variously interpreted by the vulgar gossips of the town, whose tattle gave rise, as in the matter of Agathe's and Max's parentage, to serious mistakes. It is not easy for the population of a town to disentangle the truth from a thousand conjectures in the midst of contradictory comments, and among all the hypotheses to which a single fact gives rise. In the provinces, as formerly among the politicians of *la petite Provence* at the Tuileries, everything must be accounted for, and at last everybody knows everything. But each individual clings to the view of affairs that he prefers; that is the only true one, he can prove it, and believes his own version exclusively. Hence, notwithstanding the unscreened life and the espionage of a country town, the truth is often obscured, and can be detected only by the impartiality of the historian, or of a superior mind looking down from a higher point of view.

"What do you suppose that old ape wants, at his age, of a child of fifteen?" said one and another, two years after Flore's arrival.

"What indeed?" replied a third; "his high days are long since past and gone."

"My dear fellow, the doctor is disgusted with his idiot of a son, and he cannot get over his hatred of Agathe; in that dilemma perhaps he has been such a good boy these two years past in order to marry the girl; and he might have a boy by her, strong and sturdy and wide awake like Max," observed a wisehead.

"Get along! Do you suppose that after leading such a life as Lousteau and Rouget did between 1770 and 1787, a man of sixty-two is likely to have children? Not a bit of it; the old wretch has read his Old Testament, if only from a medical point of view, and he knows how King David warmed himself in his old age. That is all, my good fellow."

"They say that Brazier, when he is fuddled, boasts at Vatan that he stole the child," cried one of those people who prefer to believe the worst.

"Bless me! neighbor, and what won't folks say at Issoudun?"

From 1800 to 1805, for five years, the doctor had the pleasure of educating Flore without the worry which Mademoiselle de Romans is said to have given to Louis the Well-beloved by her ambitions and pretensions. The little Rabouilleuse was so happy, comparing the position she now was in with the life she would have led with her uncle, that she submitted, no doubt, to her master's requirements, as an Eastern slave does.

With all respect to the writers of idyls and to philanthropists, the sons of the soil have but vague notions of certain virtues; their scruples have their root in self-interest, not in any feeling for the good and beautiful; brought up to look forward to poverty, to incessant toil and want, the prospect makes them regard everything as allowable that can rescue them from the hell of hunger and everlasting labor, especially if it is not prohibited by law. If there are exceptions, they are rare. Virtue, socially speaking, is mated with ease and begins with education. Flore Brazier was, therefore, an object of envy to every girl for six leagues round Issoudun, though in the eye of religion her conduct was in the highest degree reprehensible.

Flore, born in 1787, was brought up amid the Saturnalia of 1793 and 1798, whose lurid light was reflected on a land bereft of priesthood, worship, altars, or religious ceremonies, where marriage was a civil contract, and where revolutionary axioms left a deep impression, especially at Issoudun, where rebellion is traditional. Catholic worship was hardly re-established in 1802. The Emperor had some difficulty in finding priests; even in 1806 many a parish in France was still in widowhood, so slowly could a clergy decimated by the scaffold be reinstated after such violent dispersal. Hence, in 1802, there was nothing to accuse Flore but her own conscience. In uncle Brazier's ward was not conscience likely to prove weaker than interest? Though the cynical doctor's age led him, as there is every reason to sup-

pose, to respect this maiden of fifteen, she was not the less regarded as a very wideawake young person. However, some people insisted on finding a certificate of innocence in the cessation of the doctor's care and kindness; for the last two years of his life he treated her with more than coldness.

Old Rouget had killed enough people to be able to foresee his own end. His notary, finding him on his deathbed, wrapped in the cloak of encyclopedist philosophy, urged him to do something for the young girl, then seventeen years old.

"Very good, make her of age, emancipate her," said he.

The reply is characteristic of this old man, who never failed to point his sarcasm with an allusion to the profession of the man he was answering. By veiling his evil deeds under a witticism he obtained forgiveness for them in a part of the world where wit always wins the day, especially when it is backed up by intelligent self-interest. The notary heard in this speech the concentrated hatred of a man whom Nature had balked of an intended debauch, and his revenge on the innocent object of his senile affection. This opinion was, to some extent, confirmed by the doctor's obduracy; he left nothing to la Rabouilleuse, saying with a bitter smile, "Her beauty is wealth enough!" when the notary again pressed the matter.

Jean-Jacques Rouget did not mourn for the old man, but Flore did. The doctor had made his son very unhappy, especially since he had come of age, which was in 1791; whereas he had given the little peasant girl the material happiness which is the ideal of laboring folk. When, after the old man was buried, Fanchette said to Flore, "Well, what is to become of you now that Monsieur is gone?" Jean-Jacques' eyes beamed, and for the first time in his life his stolid face lighted up, seemed to shine with a flash of thought, and expressed a feeling.

"Leave her with me," said he to Fanchette, who was clearing the table.

Flore, at seventeen, still had that refinement of figure

and face, that elegance of beauty which had bewitched the doctor; women of the world know how to preserve it, but in a peasant girl it fades as swiftly as the flowers of the field. At the same time, the tendency to become stout, which comes to all handsome country women when they do not lead a life of toil and privation in the open fields and sunshine, was already noticeable in Flore. Her bust was large, her round, white shoulders were richly molded and finely joined to a throat that already showed fat wrinkles. But the shape of her face was still pure, and her chin as yet delicately cut.

"Flore," said Jean-Jacques in agitated tones, "you are quite used to this house?"

"Yes, Monsieur Jacques."

On the very verge of a declaration, the heir felt his tongue tied by the remembrance of the dead man but now laid in his grave, and wondered to what lengths his father's benevolence might have gone. Flore, looking at her new master, and incapable of imagining his simplicity, waited for some minutes for Jean-Jacques to proceed; but she presently left him, not knowing what to think of his obstinate silence. Whatever education she might have had from the doctor, it was many a day before she understood the character of his son, of whom this, in a few words, is the history.

At his father's death, Jacques, now thirty-seven years old, was as timid and as submissive to parental discipline as any boy of twelve. This timidity will account for his childhood, youth, and life to such readers as might not otherwise believe in such a character, or the facts of a story which is common, alas! in every rank of life—even among princes, for Sophie Dawes was taken up by the last of the Condés in a worse position than that of la Rabouilleuse. There are two kinds of timidity—timidity of mind, and timidity of the nerves; physical timidity, and moral timidity. Each is independent of the other. The body may be frightened and quake while the mind remains calm and bold, and *vice versâ*.

This is the key to many eccentricities of conduct. When both kinds meet in the same man he will be good for nothing all his life. This utter timidity is that of the person of whom we say, "He is imbecile." Still, this imbecility sometimes covers great qualities though suppressed. To this double infirmity perhaps do we owe certain monks who have lived in ecstasy. This unhappy moral and physical disposition may be produced by the perfection of the bodily organs and of the soul, as well as by certain defects, as yet not fully studied.

Jean-Jacques' timidity arose from a certain torpor of his faculties, which a first-rate tutor, or a surgeon like Desplein, would have roused. In him, as in crétins, the sensual side of love had absorbed the strength and energy which his intelligence lacked, though he had sense enough to conduct himself through life. The violence of his passion, stripped of the ideal, in which it blossoms in other young men, added to his timidity. He never could make up his mind to go courting, to use a familiar expression, to any woman in Issoudun. Now no young girl or woman could make advances to an under-sized man, with a vulgar face, which two prominent green-gooseberry eyes would have made ugly enough, if pinched features and a sallow complexion had not made him look old before his time. In fact, the vicinity of a woman annihilated the poor boy, who was goaded by his passion as vehemently as he was bridled by the few notions he had derived from his education. Halting between two equal forces, he did not know what to say, and dreaded to be asked a question, so terrified was he at having to reply. Desire, which generally loosens a man's tongue, froze his.

So Jean-Jacques lived solitary and sought solitude, not finding it irksome. The doctor saw, too late to remedy them, the disastrous results of this temperament and character. He would gladly have seen his son married; but as that would have been to subject him to a rule which would soon be despotic, he could not but hesitate. Would not

that be to hand over his fortune to the management of a stranger, an unknown woman? Now he well knew how difficult it is to foresee, from a study of a young girl, exactly what the woman's character may become. And so, while looking about him for a daughter in law whose education or whose ideas should be a sufficient guarantee, he tried to guide his son into the paths of avarice. Failing intelligence, he hoped thus to give this simpleton a guiding instinct. He began by accustoming him to a mechanical existence, and gave him fixed notions as to the investment of money; then he spared him the chief difficulties of the management of landed estate by leaving all his lands in capital order, and let on long leases. And for all that, the principal fact, which was to be paramount in this poor creature's life, escaped the doctor's penetration—Jean-Jacques was passionately in love with la Rabouilleuse.

Nothing could, indeed, be more natural. Flore was the only woman with whom the young man came in contact, the only woman he ever saw at his ease, gazing on her in secret, and watching her from hour to hour; for him Flore was the light of his father's house; without knowing it, she afforded him the only pleasures that gilded his youth. Far from being jealous of his father, he was delighted by the education he bestowed on Flore: was not the wife he needed an approachable woman who would need no courting? For passion, be it observed, brings insight with it; it can give a sort of intelligence to simpletons, fools, and idiots, especially during youth. In the least human soul we always find the animal instinct which, in its persistency, is like a thought.

Next day, Flore, who had meditated on her master's silence, expected some important communication; but, though he hovered about her, looking at her with covert, amorous glances, Jean-Jacques found nothing to say. At last, at dessert, the master began again as he had begun yesterday.

"You are comfortable here?" he asked Flore.

"Yes, Monsieur Jean. '

"Well, stay then."

"Thank you, Monsieur Jean."

This strange state of things lasted for three weeks. One night, when not a sound broke the stillness, Flore, waking by chance, heard the regular breathing of a man at her door, and was frightened at finding Jean-Jacques lying on the mat like a dog, having, no doubt, made some little hole at the bottom of the door to see into the room.

"He is in love with me," thought she; "but he will get the rheumatism at this game."

Next day Flore looked at her master in a marked way. This speechless and almost instinctive love had touched her; she no longer thought the poor simple creature so hideous, in spite of the ulcer-like spots on his temples and forehead, the terrible coronal of vitiated blood.

"You do not want to go back to the open fields, I suppose?" said Jean-Jacques, when they were alone.

"Why do you ask?" said she, looking at him.

"I wanted to know—" replied Rouget, turning the color of a boiled lobster.

"Do you want me to go?" she asked.

"No, Mademoiselle."

"Well, then, what is it you want to know? You have some reason—"

"Yes, I wanted to know—"

"What?" said Flore.

"You would not tell me."

"Yes, on my word as an honest woman."

"Ah! That is the point," said Rouget alarmed. "You are an honest woman?"

"By Heaven!"

"Yes—really?"

"Since I say it—!"

"Come, now. Are you the same now as you were when you stood there, barefoot, brought here by your uncle?"

"A pretty question, on my word!" exclaimed Flore, reddening.

The heir bent his head in silence, and did not look up again. Flore, astounded at finding her reply, so flattering to the man, received with such consternation, left the room.

Three days later, at the same hour, for they both seemed to regard the dessert as the scene of battle, Flore was the first to say to her master, "Are you vexed with me for anything?"

"No, Mademoiselle," he replied. "No . . . on the contrary—"

"You seemed so much annoyed the other day at hearing that I was an honest girl—"

"No; I only wanted to know . . . but you would not tell me."

"On my honor," said she, "I will tell you the whole truth."

"The whole truth about . . . my father—" said he in a choked voice.

"Your father," said she, looking straight into her master's eyes, "was a good fellow; he loved a laugh. . . . Well, a little. . . . Poor dear man, it was not for want of will. And then he had some grievance against you, I don't know what, and he had intentions—oh! unfortunate intentions.—He often made me laugh; well! that is all. And what then?"

"Well, then, Flore," said the heir, taking the girl's hand, "since my father was nothing to you—"

"Why, what did you suppose he was to me?" she exclaimed, in the tone of a girl offended by an insulting suggestion.

"Well, then, listen to me."

"He was my benefactor, that was all. Ah! he would have liked to make me his wife . . . but—"

"But," said Rouget, taking her hand again, for she had pulled it away, "since he was nothing of the kind, you can stay here with me?"

"If you like," said she, looking down.

"No, no. It is if you like, *you*," replied Rouget. "Yes,

you may be—mistress here. All that is here shall be yours; you shall take care of my fortune; it will be the same as your own. For I love you, and I always have loved you, from the moment when you first came in—here—there—barefoot."

Flore made no reply. The silence became awkward, and Jean-Jacques then uttered this odious argument:

"Come, it would be better than going back to the fields, wouldn't it?" he asked, with manifest eagerness.

"Dame! Monsieur Jean, as you please," said she.

But notwithstanding this "as you please," poor Rouget was no forwarder. Men of that type must have a certainty. The effort it is to them to confess their love is so great, and costs them so dear, that they know they can never do it again. Hence their attachment to the first woman who accepts them.

Events can only be inferred from the results. Ten months after his father's death, Jean-Jacques was another man; his pallid, leaden-hued face, disfigured by little boils on the temples and forehead, had lighted up, grown clear-skinned, and acquired a rosy tinge. His countenance shone with happiness. Flore insisted on her master's taking the greatest care of his person, and made it a point of honor to herself that he should be neatly dressed; she would look after him as he went out for a walk, standing on the doorstep till he was out of sight. All the town observed this alteration, which had made a new creature of Jean-Jacques Rouget.

"Have you heard the news?" asked one and another in Issoudun.

"Why—what?"

"Jean has inherited everything from his father, even la Rabouilleuse—"

"Did you suppose that the old doctor was not sharp enough to leave his son a housekeeper?"

"She is a perfect treasure for Rouget, that is certain," was the general cry.

"She is a crafty one! She is very handsome; she will make him marry her."

"What luck that girl has had!"

"It is the luck that only comes to handsome girls."

"Pooh, nonsense! So you fancy. But there was my uncle, Borniche-Hérau; well, you have heard speak of Mademoiselle Ganivet; she was as ugly as the seven deadly sins, and he left her no less than a thousand crowns a year—"

"Bah! that was in 1778!"

"All the same, Rouget is a fool; his father left him at least forty thousand francs a year. He might have married Mademoiselle Hérau."

"The doctor tried that on, but she would have nothing to say to it; Rouget is too great an idiot—"

"An idiot! Women are very happy with men of that sort."

"Is your wife happy?"

Such were the comments current in Issoudun. Though, after the manners and customs of the provinces, the world began by laughing at this quasi-marriage, it ended by admiring Flore for devoting herself to this poor creature. This was how Flore Brazier rose to sovereignty over the house of Rouget, "from father to son," to quote the words of Goddet junior. It will now not be useless to sketch the history of her rule for the better information of other bachelors.

The only person in Issoudun to complain of Flore Brazier's installation as queen on Jean-Jacques Rouget's hearth was old Fanchette; she protested against such an immoral state of affairs, and took the part of outraged decency. To be sure, she felt humiliated at her age at having for her mistress a Rabouilleuse, a girl who had come to the house without a shoe to her foot. Fanchette had three hundred francs a year from securities in the funds, for the doctor had made her invest her savings, and her late master had left her an annuity of a hundred crowns, so she could live comfortably; and she left the house nine months after her old master's funeral, on the 15th of April, 1806. To

the perspicacious reader, this will seem to mark the date when Flore ceased to be "an honest girl."

La Rabouilleuse, keen enough to foresee Fanchette's defection—for there is nothing like exercise of power to inculcate politics—had made up her mind to do without a maid. For the last six months she had, without betraying it, been studying the culinary arts which made Fanchette a *cordon bleu* worthy to cater for a doctor. As epicures, doctors may rank with bishops. Doctor Rouget had perfected Fanchette. In the country the lack of occupation, and the monotony of life, are apt to turn an active mind to cooking. Dinners are not so luxurious as in Paris, but they are better; the dishes are studied and thought out. Buried in the country, there are Carêmes in petticoats, undiscovered geniuses, who know how to turn out a simple dish of beans worthy of the approving nod with which Rossini welcomes a perfectly successful effort.

The doctor, while studying for his degree at Paris, had followed Rouelle's course of chemistry, and had picked up some notions, which he turned to account in culinary chemistry. He is remembered at Issoudun for various improvements little known beyond the limits of le Berry. He discovered that an omelet is far more delicate when the white and yolk of the eggs are not beaten together in the rough-and-ready fashion in which most cooks perform the operation. By his recipe, the white should be beaten to a stiff froth, and the yolk added by degrees. Then it should not be cooked in a frying-pan, but in a *cagnard* of china or earthenware. A *cagnard* is a sort of thick dish on four feet, which, when it is placed on the charcoal stove, allow the air to surround it, and so prevent its cracking. In Touraine, the *cagnard* is called a *cauquemarre*. Rabelais, I think, speaks of a *cauquemarre* for cooking the coquecigrues, which shows the high antiquity of the utensil. The doctor had also discovered a way of preventing the burned flavor of brown sauce; but this secret, which he unfortunately kept in his own kitchen, has been lost.

Flore, born with the gift of frying and roasting, the two arts which neither study nor experience can acquire, was soon Fanchette's superior. In making herself a *cordon bleu*, she was thinking of Jean-Jacques' comfort; still she too, it must be owned, was not a little greedy. Like all uneducated persons, being unable to occupy her brain, she expended her energies in the house. She rubbed up the furniture, restored its lustre, and kept everything throughout the house in a state of cleanliness worthy of Holland. She directed the avalanches of dirty linen, and the deluge known as a great wash, which, in the French provinces, takes place but three times a year. She examined the linen with a housewifely eye, and mended it with care. Then, anxious to initiate herself by degrees into the secrets of wealth, she mastered the small knowledge of business possessed by Rouget, and increased it by talking with Monsieur Héron, the late doctor's notary. Thus she could give her little Jean-Jacques excellent advice. Sure, as she was, of remaining mistress of the position, she nursed the poor fellow's interests with as much care and parsimony as if they had been her own. She had nothing to fear from her uncle's demands. Two months after the doctor's death, Brazier died of a fall as he came out of the tavern where, since fortune had visited him, he passed all his time. Flore's father was also dead; thus she served her master with all the affection due from an orphan who was happy to be able to make herself a home and find some interest in life.

This period was paradise to poor Jean-Jacques, who acquired the easy habits of an animal existence, graced by a sort of monastic regularity. He slept very late in the morning; Flore, who was up at daybreak to buy provisions or do the work of the house, woke her master in time for him to find breakfast ready as soon as he was dressed. After breakfast, at about eleven o'clock, Jean-Jacques took a walk, chatted with any one he met, came home by three o'clock to read the papers—that of the department, and a Paris paper, which he received three days after publication,

greasy from thirty hands through which they had passed, dirty from the snuffy noses that smeared them, brown from the many tables they had lain on. Thus our bachelor got to the dinner-hour, and he spent as long a time as he could over it. Flore told him stories of the town, and all the current gossip she had picked up. By eight o'clock the lights were out. Early to bed is, in the country, a common form of saving in candles and firing, but it tends to stupefy folks by an abuse of bed; too much sleep deadens and stultifies the mind.

Such, for nine years, was the life of these two beings—a life at once busy and vacuous, of which the chief events were a few journeys to Bourges, to Vierzon, to Châteauroux, or even a little further, when neither Monsieur Héron nor the notaries of those towns had any mortgages to offer. Rouget invested his money in first mortgages at five per cent, with substitution in favor of the wife when the lender should marry. He never advanced more than a third of the real value of the estate, and he had bills drawn to his order representing an additional two and a half per cent, for dates at intervals during the loan. These were the rules impressed on him by his father. Usury, the drag on peasant ambitions, is eating up the land, and this charge of seven and a half per cent seemed so reasonable that Jean-Jacques Rouget could pick and choose; for the notaries, who extracted handsome commissions from the clients for whom they got money so cheap, would give the old fellow notice.

During these nine years, Flore gradually, insensibly, and without intending it, had acquired absolute dominion over her master. From the first she treated Jean-Jacques with great familiarity; then, without failing in respect, she gained the upper hand by such manifest superiority of intelligence and power that he became his servant's servant. This grown-up child went half way to meet this dominion, by allowing himself to be so much waited on that Flore treated him as a mother treats her son. And at last his feeling for

her was that which makes a mother's care necessary to a child. But there were other and far stronger bonds. In the first place, Flore managed all business matters, and carried on the house. Jean-Jacques relied on her so absolutely for every kind of stewardship that, without her, life would have seemed to him not difficult, but impossible. The woman had also become necessary to his existence; she humored all his fancies—she knew them so well! He liked to see the happy face that always smiled on him; the only face that ever had smiled on him, or that ever would smile on him! Her happiness, purely material, expressed by the common phrases that are the backbone of language in the households of le Berry, and expansive in her splendid person, was, in a way, the reflection of his own. The state into which Jean-Jacques collapsed when he saw Flore clouded by some little annoyance betrayed to the woman the extent of her power; and she, to secure it, would try to exert it. In women of that kind use always means abuse. La Rabouilleuse, no doubt, made her master play his part in some of the scenes that lie buried in the mystery of private life, and of which Otway has shown a specimen in the midst of his tragedy of "Venice Preserved" between the Senator and Aquilina—a scene that gives the magnificence of horror. And then Flore saw herself so secure in her empire that she never thought of getting the old bachelor to marry her, unfortunately for him and for herself.

By the end of 1815, at the age of twenty-seven, Flore was in the fullest bloom of her beauty. Buxom and fair, as white-skinned as a farmeress of le Bessin, she was the ideal of what our forefathers would have called a splendid wench. Her beauty, somewhat of the inn-servant order, but filled out and well fed, gave her some resemblance, apart from Mademoiselle Georges' imperial beauty, to that actress at her best. Flore had the same beautiful, dazzling white arms, the fulness of outline, the pulpy sheen, the delicious modelling, but all less classically severe. The expression of her

face was tender and sweet. Her eye could not command respect, like that of the most beautiful Agrippine who has ever trod the boards of the Théatre Français since Racine's time; it invited to sensual joys.

In 1816 la Rabouilleuse first saw Maxence Gilet, and fell in love with him at first sight. Her heart was pierced by the mythological dart—that admirable symbol of a natural fact which the Greeks inevitably represented thus, having never conceived of the chivalrous ideal and melancholy passion begotten of Christianity. Flore was at this time too handsome for Max to scorn such a conquest. And thus, at eight-and-twenty, the girl first knew real love, idolatrous, infinite love, the love which includes every mode of loving from that of Gulnare to that of Medora. As soon as the penniless officer understood the respective positions of Flore and Jean-Jacques Rouget, he saw something better than a mere love affair in a connection with la Rabouilleuse. And so, for the better security of his future prospects, he was more than content to lodge under Rouget's roof, seeing how weakly a creature the old fellow was.

Flore's passion could not fail to have its influence on Jean-Jacques' life and surroundings. For a month Rouget, who had become excessively afraid of her, saw Flore's smiling and friendly face grown gloomy and cross. He endured the brunt of intentional ill-temper exactly like a married man whose wife is contemplating a betrayal. When in the midst of her most spiteful outbreaks the hapless man made so bold as to ask the cause of this change, her eyes flashed with fires of hatred, and her voice was hard with aggressive tones of scorn, such as poor Jean-Jacques had never met nor heard.

"By Heaven!" she exclaimed, "you have neither heart nor soul. For sixteen years have I been wasting my youth here, and I never discovered that you had a stone there!" and she struck her heart. "For two months past you have seen that brave Major coming here, a victim to the Bourbons, who was cut out for a General, and who is down on his luck,

driven into a hole of a place like this, where Fortune is too poor to go out walking. He is obliged to sit, stuck to a chair all day in an office, to earn what? Six hundred wretched francs—a handsome income! And you, who have six hundred and fifty-nine thousand francs in snug investments, and sixty thousand francs a year—not to say that, thanks to me, you don't spend a thousand crowns a year for everything included, even my clothes—in short, everything—you never think of offering him shelter here, where the whole top floor is empty! No, you would let the rats and mice keep up a dance there rather than put a human being in, and he a man your father always regarded as his son!—Do you want to know what you are? Well, I will tell you—you are a fratricide! And you think I don't know why? You saw that I felt an interest in him, and that nettled you! For all that you seem such a blockhead, you have more cunning in you than the cunningest, and that is what you are. . . . Very well then, I do take an interest in him . . . a warm one at that . . ."

"But, Flore . . ."

"Oh, there is no 'but, Flore,' in the case. You may go and look for another Flore—if you can find one!—For may this glass of wine poison me if I don't turn out of your hovel of a house! I shall have cost you nothing, thank God, during the twelve years I have stayed in it, and you have had your comforts cheap! Anywhere else I could have earned my living by working as I do here; washing, ironing, taking care of the linen, going to market, cooking, looking after your interests in every way, slaving to death from morning till night.—And this is what I get!"

"But, Flore . . ."

"Oh, yes, Flore indeed! A pretty Flore you will get, at fifty-one, as you are, and in very bad health, and stooping so that it is frightful to see—I know all about it. And with all that you are not so very amusing . . ."

"But, Flore . . ."

"There, leave me in peace."

And she left the room, slamming the door with such violence that the house rang with it and seemed to shake on its foundations. Jean-Jacques Rouget opened it very gently, and more gently still went into the kitchen where Flore was muttering.

"But, Flore," said this sheep, "this is the very first I have heard of your wishes; how can you tell whether I will or will not?"

"In the first place," she went on, "we ought to have a man in the house. It is known that you have ten, fifteen, twenty thousand francs, and if any one wanted to rob you we should be murdered. For my part, I have no wish to wake up one fine morning cut into four quarters, like the poor servant girl who was fool enough to try to defend her master. Well! But if it were known that we had a man on the premises who is as brave as Cæsar, and has the use of his hands—Max could settle three thieves while you were talking about it.—Well, I say, I should sleep easier. People will cram you with nonsense. Here, I am in love with him; there, I adore him! Do you know what you have got to say? Well, just tell them that you know all that, but that your father told you on his deathbed to take care of his poor Max. Then every one must hold their tongue, for the flagstones of Issoudun could tell you that your father paid for his schooling—so there! For nine years I have eaten your bread . . ."

"Flore, Flore . . ."

"And more than one young fellow in this town has come to me a-courtin'—so there!—And one offers me a gold chain, and another a gold watch: 'Dear little Flore, if only you would come away from that old idiot of a Rouget,' that is the sort of thing they say of you! 'What, I! leave him?—I should think so! such an innocent as that.—Why, what would become of him?' I have always answered. 'No, no, where a Nanny is tethered she must eat . . .'"

"Yes, Flore, I have no one in the world but you, and I am only too happy. If it will give you pleasure, child,

we will have Maxence Gilet in the house; he can eat with us . . ."

"By Heaven! I should hope so!"

"There, there, don't be angry . . .' "

"Enough for one is enough for two," said she, laughing. "But now, if you are very nice, do you know what you will do, my dear old boy? You will take a turn in front of the Mairie at about four o'clock, and manage to meet Major Gilet, and ask him to dinner. If he makes any difficulties, tell him it is to please me; he is too polite to refuse that. And then, over your dessert, if he talks of his misfortunes, or of the hulks—and you can surely have sense enough to lead up to the subject—you will offer him a home here. If he makes any objection, never mind; I will find a way to persuade him—"

As he slowly paced the Boulevard Baron, Rouget, so far as he was capable, thought over this incident. If he were to part with Flore—and the mere idea made him dizzy—what woman could he find to take her place? Marry? At his age he would be married for his money, and even more cruelly handled by a legitimate wife than he was by Flore. Moreover, the notion of being bereft of her affection, even if it were a delusion, was intolerably painful. So he was as charming to Major Gilet as he knew how to be. As Flore had wished, the invitation was given in the presence of witnesses, so as to leave Max's honor clear.

Flore and her master were reconciled; but from that day Jean-Jacques was aware of shades of demeanor proving a complete change in la Rabouilleuse's affection for him.

For about a fortnight Flore complained loudly to the tradespeople, at market, and to her gossips, of Monsieur Rouget's tyranny in taking it into his head to have his natural half-brother under his roof. But no one was taken in by this farce, and Flore was considered an extremely shrewd and wily creature.

Old Rouget was made very happy by the installation of Max as a member of the household, for in him he had a

companion who was most carefully attentive to him without servility. Gilet chatted, talked politics, and sometimes walked out with him.

As soon as the officer was quite at home, Flore refused to be cook any longer; "kitchen work spoiled her hands," she said. By desire of the Grand Master of the Order, la Cognette found a relation of her own, an old maid, whose master, a curé, had just died, leaving her nothing, an excellent cook, who would devote herself through life and death to Flore and Max. And, in the name of these two potentates, la Cognette could promise her relation a pension of three hundred francs after ten years of good, honest, and loyal service. La Védie, who was sixty, was remarkable for a face deeply marked by smallpox and of suitable ugliness.

When she assumed her functions Flore became Mademoiselle Brazier. She wore stays, she dressed in silk, in fine woollen stuffs, or in cambric, according to the season. She had collars, costly kerchiefs, embroidered caps and lace tuckers, wore dainty boots, and kept herself in an elegant and handsome style that made her look younger. She was now like a rough diamond that has been cut and set by the jeweller to show off its value. She was anxious to do Max credit. By the end of that year, 1817, she had procured a horse from Bourges, said to be of English breed for the poor Major, who was tired of going about on foot. Max had picked up in the neighborhood a man, a Pole named Kouski, formerly a lancer in the Imperial Guard, and now reduced to misery, who was only too glad to find a berth at Monsieur Rouget's as the Major's servant. Max was Kouski's idol, especially after the fray with the three Royalists. So after 1817 the Rouget household consisted of five persons, three of them idle; and the expenses amounted to about eight thousand francs a year.

By the time when Madame Bridau came back to Issoudun to save her inheritance, as Maître Desroches expressed it, so seriously endangered, Père Rouget, as he was commonly

called, had by degrees lapsed into an almost vegetative existence. To begin with, from the day when Max was at home in the house, Mademoiselle Brazier kept house with quite Episcopal luxury. Rouget, thus led into high living, and tempted by the excellent dishes concocted by la Védie, ate more and more every day. Notwithstanding such abundant and nutritious feeding, he did not get fat. He grew every day more bent, like a man tired out—perhaps by the effort of digestion—and his eyes sank in puffy circles. Still, when, in his walks, any one asked after his health: "I never was better in my life," was always his reply. As he had always been known to have a most limited intellect, the gradual deterioration of his faculties was not observed. His love for Flore was the one emotion that kept him alive; he existed only for her; his weakness before her knew no measure; he obeyed her every look and watched this creature's movements as a dog watches his master's least gesture. And, as Madame Hochon said, Père Rouget, at fifty-seven, looked older than Monsieur Hochon, who was eighty.

As may easily be supposed, Max's rooms were worthy of so charming a youth. And in six years, year by year, the Major had made the comfort of his lodgings more perfect, and added grace to the smallest details, as much for his own sake as for Flore's. Still, it was only the comfort of Issoudun; painted floors, wall papers of some elegance, mahogany furniture, mirrors in gilt frames, muslin curtains with red bands to loop them, an Arabian bedstead with curtains hung as a country upholsterer arranges them for a wealthy bride, and which then seemed the height of magnificence, but which are to be seen in the commonest fashion plates, and are so general now that in Paris even petty dealers will not have them when they marry. Then—an unheard-of thing, which gave rise to much talk in Issoudun—there was matting on the stairs, to deaden noise no doubt! And, in fact, Max, as he came in before daybreak, woke nobody, and Rouget never suspected his lodger's share in the dark deeds of the Knights of Idlesse.

At about eight in the morning Flore, in a pretty pink-striped cotton wrapper and a lace cap, her feet in furred slippers, gently opened Max's bedroom door, but seeing him asleep, she stood a moment by the bed.

"He came in so late," thought she; "at half-past three. A man must be made of iron to be able to stand such racket as that! And isn't he strong too?—The love of a man! I wonder what they were doing last night!"

"You, my little Flore," said Max, waking as a soldier wakes, inured by the vicissitudes of war to find all his wits and his presence of mind, however suddenly he may be roused.

"You are sleepy; I am going . . ."

"No, stay; there are serious things—"

"You have done something too mad last night?"

"Ah, pooh! The matter in hand concerns that old fool. Look here; you never mentioned his family. Well, they are coming here—his family is coming, to cut us out no doubt."

"Oh, I will give them a startler!" said Flore.

"Mademoiselle Brazier," said Max gravely, "matters are too serious to be taken at a rush. Send me up my coffee; I will have it in bed, where I will consider what proceedings we must take. . . . Come back at nine, and we will talk it over. Meanwhile behave as if you had heard nothing."

Startled by this news, Flore left Max, and went to make his coffee; but a quarter of an hour later Baruch rushed in and said to the Grand Master, "Fario is looking for his cart."

Max was dressed in five minutes, went downstairs, and with an air of lounging for his pleasure, made his way to the foot of the tower hill, where he saw a considerable crowd.

"What is the matter?" said Max, making his way through the mob to speak to the Spaniard.

Fario, a small, shrivelled man, was ugly enough to have been a grandee. His very fiery, very small eyes, very close

together, would have earned him at Naples a reputation for the evil eye. The little man seemed gentle because he was grave, quiet, and slow in his movements; and he was commonly spoken of as *bonhomme*, good old Fario. But his complexion, of the color of gingerbread, and his gentle manner, concealed from the ignorant, but betrayed to the knowing, his character as a half-Moorish peasant from Granada, who had not yet been roused from his torpid indifference.

"But are you sure," said Max, after listening to the lamentations of the seed-merchant, "that you brought your cart? For, thank Heaven, we have no thieves in Issoudun . . ."

"I left it there . . ."

"But if the horse was harnessed to it, may he not have gone away with the cart?"

"There is my horse," said Fario, pointing to his steed standing harnessed about thirty yards off.

Max solemnly went to the spot, so as to be able by looking up to see the foot of the tower, for the people had collected at the bottom of the hill. Everybody followed him, and this was what the rascal wanted.

"Has any one by mistake put a cart in his pocket?" cried François.

"Come, feel, turn them out!" said Baruch. Shouts of laughter rose on all sides. Fario swore; now in a Spaniard an oath means the last pitch of fury.

"Is yours a light cart?" asked Max.

"Light?" retorted Fario. "If all those who are laughing at me had it over their toes, their corns would not hurt them again."

"Well, but it must be devilish light," replied Max, pointing to the tower, "for it has flown to the top of the hill."

At these words all looked up, and for a moment there was almost a riot in the market-place. Every one was pointing to this magical vehicle. Every tongue was wagging.

"The Devil has a care for the innkeepers, who are all

doomed to perdition," said Goddet to the speechless owner; "he wants to teach you not to leave carts about instead of putting up at the inn."

At this speech the mob howled, for Fario was reckoned miserly.

"Come, my good man," said Max, "do not lose heart. We will go up and see how the cart got there. The deuce is in it! We will lend you a hand. Will you come, Baruch? You," he added in a whisper to François, "clear every one out of the way, and mind there is no one standing below when you see us at the top."

Fario, with Max, Baruch, and three more of the Knights, climbed up to the tower. During the scramble, which was not free from danger, Max remarked to Fario that there were no tracks, nor anything to show how the cart had been got up. And Fario began to believe in some magic; he had quite lost his head. On reaching the top and examining matters, the feat seriously seemed quite impossible.

"And however shall we get it down again?" said the Spaniard, whose little eyes expressed positive terror, while his tawny hollow face, which looked as if it could never change color, turned pale.

"Well," said Max, "I see no difficulty in that."

And taking advantage of Fario's bewilderment, he took the cart up by the shafts, giving it a tilt with his strong arms so as to give it impetus; then, at the moment when he let it go, he shouted in a voice of thunder, "Look out below!" But there was no danger. The crowd, warned by François, and eager with curiosity, had withdrawn to a little distance to see what was going on on the knoll. The cart smashed in picturesque style, broken into a thousand pieces.

"There, it is down again!" said Baruch.

"Ah, blackguards, thieves, villains!" yelled Fario. "It was you who got it up, I'll be bound!"

Max, Baruch, and their three comrades began to laugh at the Spaniard's abuse.

"We wanted to do you a service," said Max haughtily.

"To save your damned cart I ran the risk of going down on the top of it, and this is how you thank me. What country do you come from, pray?"

"From a country where we do not forgive an injury," replied Fario, quivering with rage. "My cart may serve you a turn to take you to the Devil! Unless," he added, as mild as a lamb, "you like to replace it by a new one?"

"We will talk about it," said Max, going down the hill.

When they were at the bottom, and had rejoined the first group of laughers, Max took Fario by the jacket-button, and said—

"Yes, my good Fario, I will make you a present of a splendid cart if you will give me two hundred and fifty francs; I won't guarantee that, like this one, it is warranted for a tumbler's trap."

This jest, however, touched Fario no more than if he were concluding an ordinary bargain.

"Dame!" he replied calmly, "you will give me francs enough to replace my poor cart, and you will never spend Père Rouget's money in a better cause."

Max turned white and lifted his formidable fist to strike Fario; but Baruch, who knew that such a blow would not fall only on the Spaniard, whisked him off like a feather, saying to Max in an undertone, "Don't play the fool!"

The Major, recalled to order, began to laugh, and said to Fario, "Though I have by accident damaged your cart, you are trying to slander me, so we are quits."

"Not yet," muttered Fario. "But I am glad to have found out what my cart is worth!"

"Ah, ha! Max, you have found your match!" said a bystander, who was not a member of the Order.

"Good-by, Monsieur Gilet; you have not heard the last of your clever trick!" said the Spaniard, mounting his horse and disappearing in the midst of a loud hurrah!

"I will keep the iron tires for you," cried a wheelwright, who had come up to study the effects of the fall. One of

the shafts was standing upright, planted in the ground like a tree.

Max was pale and thoughtful, stung to the heart by the Spaniard's speech. For five days at Issoudun Fario's cart was the talk of the town. It was fated to travel far, as young Goddet said, for it made the round of the province, where the pranks of Max and Baruch were much discussed. Hence, even a week after the event, the Spaniard was still the talk of the departments and the subject of much "jaw," a fact to which he was keenly alive. Max and la Rabouilleuse, too, as a result of the vindictive Spaniard's retort, were the subject of endless comments, whispered indeed at Issoudun, but loudly spoken at Bourges, at Vatan, at Vierzon, and at Châteauroux. Maxence Gilet knew the country well enough to imagine how envenomed these remarks must be.

"No one can hinder their talking," thought he. "Ah! that was a bad night's work."

"Well, Max," said François, taking his arm, "they are to be here to-night."

"Who?"

"The Bridaus. My grandmother has just had a letter from her goddaughter."

"Listen to me, my boy," said Max in his ear; "I have thought this business over very seriously. Neither Flore nor I must appear to have any ill-feeling toward the Bridaus. If the heirs leave Issoudun, it is your people, the Hochons, who must seem to be the cause. Study these Paris folks well; and when I have taken their measure, to-morrow at la Cognette's we will see what can be done with them, and how we can make a breach between them and your grandfather."

"The Spaniard has found the joint in Max's harness," said Baruch to his cousin François as they went in, looking at his friend entering Rouget's door.

While Max was thus occupied, Flore, notwithstanding her companion's counsel, had been unable to control her

rage; without knowing whether she was seconding or interfering with Max's plans, she broke out against the poor old bachelor. When Jean-Jacques incurred his nurse's displeasure, he found himself suddenly bereft of all the little cares and vulgar petting which were the joy of his life. In short, Flore put her master in disgrace. No more little affectionate words with which she was wont to grace her conversation, in various tones, with more or less tender glances—my puss, my chicken, my good old dog, my spoiled boy. No more familiar *tu*. A *vous*, short and cold, and ironically respectful, would pierce the unhappy man's heart like a knife. This *vous* was a declaration of war.

Then, instead of helping him to dress, giving him his things, anticipating his wishes, looking at him with the sort of admiration women know how to convey—and the broader it is, the more gratifying—saying, "You are as fresh as a rose! Come, you look wonderfully well! How fine you are, old man!"—instead of entertaining him while he dressed with the fun and follies that amused him, Flore left him to manage for himself. If he called her, she would answer from the bottom of the stairs:

"Well, I can't do two things at once—get your breakfast and wait on you in your room. Aren't you old enough to dress yourself?"

"Good God! How have I offended her?" the old fellow wondered, on receiving one of these rebuffs, when he called for some hot water to shave himself.

"Védie, take up some hot water to Monsieur," cried Flore.

"Védie?" said the poor man, bewildered by his dread of the wrath impending over him. "Védie, what is the matter with Madame this morning?"

Flore insisted on being called Madame by her master, by Védie, Kouski, and Max.

"She has heard something seemingly not much to your credit," replied Védie, putting on a very pathetic air. "You are very foolish, Monsieur. There, I am but a poor servant, and you may tell me not to be poking my nose into your con-

cerns; but you may hunt through all the women in the world like the King in Holy Writ, and you will never find her like. You ought to kiss the place where she has set her foot. . . . I tell you, if you vex her, it will be enough to break your own heart! And there really were tears in her eyes."

Védie left the poor man quite annihilated; he sank into a chair, gazing into space like a man melancholy mad, and forgot to shave himself. These alternations of hot and cold affected the poor feeble creature, who lived only through his hold on love, like the deadly chill produced by a sudden passage from tropical heat to polar cold. They were moral pleurisies which exhausted him like so many illnesses. Flore only in the whole world could act upon him so, for to her alone he was as kind as he was silly.

"What! You have not shaved yet?" said she, opening the door. She made Père Rouget start violently; from being pale and limp, he suddenly turned red for a moment, but dared not resent this attack.

"Your breakfast is waiting. But you may go down in your dressing-gown and slippers—you will breakfast by yourself."

And she vanished without waiting for a reply. To make the poor man breakfast alone was one of the punishments which most deeply distressed him; he liked to talk while he was eating. As he reached the bottom of the stairs, Rouget was seized with a fit of coughing, for excitement had stirred his rheum.

"Oh yes, you may cough!" said Flore in the kitchen, not caring whether her master heard her or no. "My word! the old wretch is strong enough to weather it without any one troubling theirselves about him! If he ever coughs his soul up, it won't be in our time."

Such were the amenities with which la Rabouilleuse favored Rouget in her fits of rage. The poor man sat down in deep dejection at a corner of the table in the middle of the room, looking at his old furniture and old pictures with a desolate air.

"You might have put on a necktie!" said Flore, coming in. "Do you think a neck like yours is pretty to see—redder and more wrinkled than a turkey-cock's."

"But what have I done?" he asked, raising his pale green eyes full of tears, and confronting Flore's cold look.

"What have you done?" she echoed. "And you don't know? What a hypocrite! Why, your sister Agathe—who is as much your sister as I am sister to the Tower of Issoudun, if you can believe your father, and who is nothing on earth to you—is coming from Paris with her son, that wretched tu'penny painter, and they're coming to see you—"

"My sister and nephews are coming to Issoudun?" said he, quite bewildered.

"Oh, yes; you may pretend to be astonished, to make me believe that you did not write to them to come! That is a very thin trick. Don't be afraid, we won't interfere with your Paris friends, for we shall have shaken the dust off our feet before they set theirs within these walls! Max and I shall be gone never to return! As to your will—I will tear it in four quarters under your nose, under your beard, do you hear? You may leave your goods to your family, as we are not your family. After that you will see whether you are loved, for your own sake, by people who have not seen you for thirty years, or have never seen you at all! Your sister will not fill my place—a double-distilled bigot!"

"If that is all, my pretty Flore," said the old man, "I shall see neither my sister nor my nephews. I swear to you solemnly that this is the first word I have heard of their arrival, and it is a got-up thing arranged by Madame Hochon, the old bigot—!".

Max, who had heard Père Rouget's reply, suddenly came in, saying in a hectoring tone, "What is the matter?"

"My good Max," the old man went on, only too glad to purchase the Major's adhesion, for, by agreement with Flore, he was always to take Rouget's part, "I swear to you, by all that is sacred, that I have only this instant heard the news.

I never wrote to my sister; my father made me promise to leave her nothing, to give it rather to the Church—in short, I refuse to see either my sister Agathe or her sons."

"Your father was wrong, my dear Jean-Jacques, and Madame is yet more wrong," replied Max. "Your father had his own reasons—he is dead, his hatred ought to die with him. Your sister is your sister, your nephews are your nephews. You owe it to yourself to receive them cordially, and you owe it to us too. What would be said in Issoudun? Sss—thunder! I have enough on my shoulders; the only thing wanting is to give rise to a report that we keep you shut up, that you are not a free agent, that we have incensed you against your heirs, that we are trying to possess ourselves of your fortune. . . . The Devil may take me if I don't desert from the service at the very next calumny; one is quite enough!—Let us have breakfast."

Flore, as meek as a mouse, helped Védie to lay the table. Rouget, filled with admiration for Max, took him by both hands, led him into a window bay, and said to him in an undertone:

"Ah, Max, if I had a son, I should not love him so well as I love you. Flore was right in saying that you two are my family. . . . You have a sense of honor, Max, and all you have said is very right—"

"You ought to entertain your sister and your nephew," said Max, interrupting him, "but ought not to alter your will; thus you will satisfy your father and everybody else."

"Come, my little dears!" cried Flore, in cheerful tones, "the salmis will be cold. There, old boy, there is a wing for you," she said, smiling on Jean-Jacques.

At this speech the old fellow's long face lost its cadaverous tints, a treacly smile played on his flabby lips; but he coughed again, for the joy of being received again into favor excited him as greatly as being in disgrace. Flore sprang up, snatched a little cashmere shawl off her shoulders, and wrapped it round the old man's throat as a comforter, saying:

"It is silly to upset yourself so over trifles. Here, foolish old boy, that will do you good—it has been next my heart—"

"What a good soul!" said Rouget to Max, while Flore went off for a black velvet cap to cover the old fellow's almost bald head.

"As good as she is handsome," replied Max; "but a little hasty, like all those who carry their heart in their hand."

The reader may feel inclined to find fault with the crudities of this picture, and to think that the displays of la Rabouilleuse's temper are marked by some truths which the painter should leave in the shade? Well; this scene, a hundred times repeated with horrible variations, is in all its coarse and repulsive veraciousness the type of that which every woman will play, on whatever rung of the social ladder she may stand, if any kind of self-interest has diverted her from the path of obedience, and she has seized the reins of power. To women as to great politicians—the end justifies any means. Between Flore Brazier and a duchess, between the duchess and the richest tradesman's wife, between the tradesman's wife and the most splendidly kept woman, there are no differences but those due to education and to the atmosphere in which they live. A fine lady's sulks take the place of Flore's violence; in every rank bitter taunts, witty sarcasm, cold disdain, hypocritical whining, affected quarrels, are quite as successful as the low abuse of this Madame Everard of Issoudun.

Max told the story of Fario with so much drollery that he made the old fellow laugh. Védie and Kouski, who had come up to listen to the tale, exploded in the passage. As for Flore, she laughed hysterically. After breakfast, while Jean-Jacques was reading the papers—for they now subscribed to the "Constitutionnel" and the "Pandore"—Max took Flore up to his room.

"Are you certain," said he, "that he has never made another will since he named you as his legatee?"

"He has no writing things," said she.

"He may have dictated one to some notary," said Max. "If he has not done so, we must be prepared for the contingency. So receive the Bridaus as well as possible; but meanwhile we must try, as soon as we can, to realize all the money out on mortgage. Our notaries will be only too glad to effect the transfers; that is what they eat and drink by. State securities are going up every day; we are to conquer Spain and deliver Ferdinand VII. from his Cortès, so next year they may perhaps be above par. So it will be a good stroke of business to invest the old man's seven hundred and fifty thousand francs in the funds at 89. Only try and get them put into your name. It will always be something saved from the fire."

"A capital idea," said Flore.

"And as on eight hundred and ninety thousand francs he will draw fifty thousand francs a year, you must get him to borrow a hundred and forty thousand francs for two years, to be repaid in two instalments. Thus in two years we shall be drawing a hundred thousand francs from Paris and ninety thousand here, so we risk nothing."

"Without you, my splendid Max, what would have become of us!" said she.

"Oh, to-morrow evening, at la Cognette's, after I have seen this Paris couple, I will find some means of making the Hochons themselves see them off the premises."

"Oh, you are so clever! You are an angel, a love of a man!"

The Place Saint-Jean is situated half-way down a street called la Grande Narette in the upper part, and la Petite Narette below. In le Berry the word Narette means the same sort of highway as the Genoese *Salita*, a street built on a steep slope. Between the Place Saint-Jean and the Vilatte gate, the Narette is excessively steep. Old Monsieur Hochon's house is opposite to that where lived Jean-Jacques Rouget. What was going on at Père Rouget's could often be seen out of the drawing-room window where Madame

Hochon sat, and *vice versâ* when the curtains were undraw or the doors left open.

Hochon's house is so much like Rouget's that they were no doubt, built by the same architect. Hochon, long ag the collector of taxes at Selles, was born at Issoudun, an returned thither to marry the sister of the sub-delegate, th gallant Lousteau, exchanging his post at Selles for a simila one at Issoudun. He had retired before 1787, and so escape the storms of the Revolution, while fully supporting its prin ciples, like all honest men who shout on the winning side It was not for nothing that Monsieur Hochon had a reputa tion for avarice. But would it not be mere vain repetitio to describe him? One of the miserly acts, which made hi famous, will, no doubt, be enough to paint Monsieur Hocho at full length.

At the time of his daughter's marriage to a Borniche—sh was since dead—it was necessary to give a dinner to th Borniche family. The bridegroom, who expected to inheri a fine fortune, died soon after of grief at having failed i business, and yet more at his father's and mother's refus to help him. These old Borniches were still living, delighte to have seen Monsieur Hochon take the guardianship of hi grandchildren on account of his daughter's settlement, whic he had succeeded in saving.

On the day when the marriage contract was to be signed all the relations of both families had assembled in the draw ing-room—the Hochons on one side, and the Borniches o the other, all in their Sunday best. In the midst of readin the contract, very solemnly performed by young Héron th notary, the cook came in and asked Monsieur Hochon fo some pack-thread to truss the turkey—an important item i the bill of fare. The old tax-collector pulled out of th depths of his coat-pocket an end of string, which had, n doubt, tied up some parcel, and gave it to her; but befo the woman had reached the door, he called out, "Gritte, l me have it back!" Gritte is a local abbreviation of Ma guerite.

This will enable you to understand Monsieur Hochon, and the joke perpetrated by the town on the name of the family, consisting of the father, mother, and three children —*les cinq cochons*, the five pigs.

As years went by, old Hochon became more and more niggardly and careful, and he was now eighty-five years of age. He was one of those who will stoop in the street, in the midst of an animated conversation, to pick up a pin, saying, "That is a woman's wage!" and stick it into his coat cuff. He complained bitterly of the inferior quality of cloth nowadays, remarking that his coat had lasted only ten years. Tall, lean, and bony, with a yellow complexion, speaking little, reading little, never fatiguing himself, as ceremonious as an Oriental, he maintained a rule of strict sobriety in his household, doling out food and drink to his fairly numerous family, consisting of his wife *née* Lousteau, of his grandson Baruch and granddaughter Adolphine, the heirs of the old Borniches, and of his other grandson, François Hochon.

His eldest son, caught for the army in 1813 by the levy of men of respectable birth who escaped the conscription, and who were enrolled under the name of guards of honor, was killed at the battle of Hanau. The heir-presumptive had married, very young, a rich woman, hoping thus to evade any call to arms; but then he ran through all his money, foreseeing the end. His wife, who followed the French army at a distance, died at Strasburg in 1814, leaving debts which old Hochon would not pay, quoting to the creditors the axiom of a past code, "Women are minors."

So folks could still say *les cinq Hochons*, since the household consisted of three grandchildren and two grandparents; and the jest still survived, for in the country no jest grows too stale. Gritte, now sixty years old, managed all the work of the house.

The house, though spacious, was scantily furnished. However, Madame Bridau could be very decently lodged in two rooms on the second floor. Old Hochon now repented of having kept two beds in these rooms, and belonging to

each an old armchair in unvarnished wood, with a worsted-work seat, and a walnut wood table, on which stood a wide-mouthed water jug in a basin edged with blue. The old man kept his apples and winter pears, his quinces and medlars, on straw in these two rooms, where the rats and mice had a high time, and there was a strong flavor of fruit and mice. Madame Hochon had everything cleaned; the paper, where it had fallen from the walls, was stuck on again with wafers; she furnished the windows with muslin blinds cut out of some old skirts of her own. Then, when her husband refused to buy two little list rugs, she placed her own bedside rug for her little Agathe, talking of this mother of past seven-and-forty as "Poor child!"

Madame Hochon borrowed two bed-tables from the Borniches, and most daringly hired from a second-hand shop two old chests of drawers with brass handles. She possessed two pairs of candlesticks, made of some scarce wood by her father, who had had a passion for turning. From 1770 to 1780 it had been the fashion among rich people to learn a trade; and Monsieur Lousteau the elder, head commissioner of subsidies, was a turner, as Louis XVI. was a locksmith. These candlesticks were decorated with rings in briar-root, peach, and apricot wood. Madame Hochon risked these precious relics!

All these preparations and this great sacrifice added to Monsieur Hochon's serious mien; he did not yet believe that the Bridaus would come.

On the very morning of the day made famous by the trick played on Fario, Madame Hochon said to her husband after breakfast:

"I hope, Hochon, that you will make Madame Bridau, my goddaughter, properly welcome." Then, after assuring herself that her grandchildren had left the room, she added: "I am mistress of my own fortune; do not compel me to indemnify Agathe by my will for an unpleasant reception."

"And do you suppose, Madame," said Hochon gently,

"that at my age I do not know how to behave with decent civility."

"You know very well what I mean, old fox! Be kind to our guests, and remember how truly I love Agathe—"

"Yes, and you truly loved Maxence Gilet, who is going to swallow whole the fortune that ought to be your Agathe's. Ah! you cherished a serpent in your bosom then!—After all, the Rougets' money was fated to belong to some Lousteau or another."

Having made this allusion to the supposed parentage of Agathe and of Max, Hochon was about to leave the room; but old Madame Hochon, still slender and upright, wearing a mob cap with bows, and her hair powdered, with a shot-silk petticoat, tight sleeves, and high-heeled slippers, set her snuff-box down on her little table, and said:

"Really, Monsieur Hochon, how can a clever man like you repeat the nonsense which, unluckily, destroyed my poor friend's peace of mind, and cost my poor goddaughter her share of her father's fortune? Max Gilet is not my brother's son, and I often advised him to save the money he spent on him. And you know as well as I do that Madame Rouget was virtue itself—"

"Well, the daughter is worthy of her mother, for she seems to me a great goose. After losing all her money, she brought up her sons so well that one of them is in prison awaiting his trial before the supreme court for a conspiracy à la Berton. As to the other—worse and worse! he is a painter.—If your protégés remain here till they have extracted that idiot Rouget from the clutches of la Rabouilleuse and Gilet we shall get through more than one bushel of salt with them."

"That will do, Monsieur Hochon; but you might wish them success!"

Monsieur Hochon took up his hat and his ivory-handled cane, and went out, amazed by this alarming speech, for he had not supposed his wife to be so determined. Madame Hochon, on her part, took her prayer-book to read the order

of service, her great age hindering her from going to mass every morning. It was with difficulty that she got to church on Sundays and high festivals. Since receiving Agathe's reply she had added to her regular prayers a special intercession, beseeching God to open the eyes of Jean-Jacques Rouget, to bless Agathe, and to grant success to the undertaking to which she had been driven.

Concealing the fact from her two grandsons, whom she regarded as *parpaillots* (renegades), she had requested the curé to say masses for nine days, attended by her granddaughter Adolphine Borniche, who put up her grandmother's prayers in the church as her proxy.

Adolphine, now eighteen, having stitched by her grandmother's side for seven years, in this chill home of methodical and melancholy regularity, was all the more ready to perform the *neuvaine*, because she hoped to inspire some tender feeling in Joseph Bridau, the painter so little understood by Monsieur Hochon, and in whom she took a keen interest, were it only on account of the monstrous ideas her grandfather attributed to the young Paris artist.

Old people, wise people, the magnates of the town, and fathers of families, all approved of Madame Hochon's conduct; and their good wishes for her goddaughter and for Agathe's sons were reinforced by the secret contempt they had long felt for the proceedings of Maxence Gilet. So the advent of Père Rouget's sister and nephew gave rise to two factions in Issoudun: that of the older and upper citizen class, who could only watch events and hope for the best without helping matters; and that of the Knights of Idlesse and Max's partisans, who were, unfortunately, capable of doing much mischief to undermine the Parisians.

On this day, then, Agathe and Joseph got out of the coach at the office of the Messageries, Place Misère, at three in the afternoon. Though tired, Madame Bridau felt young again at the sight of her native town, where at every step she found some reminiscence and impression of her girl-

hood. In the state of mind prevailing at Issoudun the arrival of the Parisians was known all over the town within ten minutes.

Madame Hochon appeared at the front gate to receive her goddaughter, and kissed her as if she had been a child of her own. After seventy-two years of a life as empty as it was monotonous, with nothing to look back upon but the coffins of her three children, all dying in misfortune, she had cultivated a sort of artificial motherhood for the girl who, as she expressed it, had for sixteen years lived in her pocket. In the gloom of a provincial life she had cherished this old regard, this child's life, and all its memories, just as if Agathe were still with her, and she took a passionate interest in all that concerned the Bridaus.

Agathe was led in triumph into the drawing-room, where worthy Monsieur Hochon stood as cold as a raked-out oven.

"Here is Monsieur Hochon; how do you think he is looking?"

"Why, exactly as he did when I left him," said Agathe.

"Ah, it is evident you have come from Paris, you pay compliments," said the old man.

The family were introduced: first, little Baruch Borniche, a tall youth of two-and-twenty; then little François Hochon, now twenty-four; and lastly, little Adolphine, who blushed, and did not know what to do with her hands, and especially with her eyes, for she did not wish to appear to stare at Joseph Bridau, who was anxiously examined by the two lads and by old Hochon, but from different points of view. The miser was reflecting, "He must have just come out of the hospital; he will eat like a fever-patient."

The two young men were saying to themselves, "What a brigand! What a head! We shall have our hands full!"

"Here is my son the painter, my good Joseph," said Agathe finally, introducing the artist.

There was a little sigh in the emphasis on the word "good," which betrayed Agathe's heart; she was thinking of the prisoner at the Luxembourg.

"He looks ill," cried Madame Hochon; "he is not like you—"

"No, Madame," said Joseph, with the rough simplicity of an artist, "I am like my father, only uglier!"

Madame Hochon pressed Agathe's hand, which she was holding, and gave her a look. That grasp, that glance, were meant to convey:

"Ah, my child, I quite understand your preferring that scapegrace Philippe."

"I never saw your father, my dear boy," replied Madame Hochon aloud; "but that you are your mother's son is enough to make me love you. Besides, you have talent, from what the late Madame Descoings used to write to me; she was the only person to give me any news of you in these latter times."

"Talent?" said the artist; "no, not yet; but with time and perseverance I may some day win both glory and fortune."

"By painting?" said Monsieur Hochon, with deep irony.

"Come, Adolphine," said Madame Hochon, "go and see about getting the dinner served."

"Mother," said Joseph, "I will go and carry up our trunks, which have just come."

"Hochon, will you show Monsieur Bridau the rooms," said the grandmother to François.

As dinner was not till four, and it was now but half-past three, Baruch went round the town giving news of the Bridaus' arrival, describing Agathe's dress, and, above all, Joseph, whose hollow cheeks and sickly, strongly-marked features were like the ideal portrait of a brigand. In every house that day Joseph was the sole subject of conversation.

"Old Rouget's sister must have met an ape somewhere before her son was born; he is just like a monkey."—"He has a face like a brigand, and eyes like a basilisk."—"They say he is extraordinary to behold, quite alarming."—"All Paris artists are the same."—"They are as spiteful as cunning asses, and as vicious as apes."—"It is in the nature of their calling."—"I have just seen Monsieur Beaussier, who

says he would not for worlds meet him at night in a wood. He saw him in the diligence."—"He has hollows in his face like a horse, and he waves his arms like a madman."—"That fellow is capable of any crime; it is his fault, perhaps, that his brother, who was a fine handsome man, has gone to the bad. Poor Madame Bridau, she does not look very happy with him. Suppose we take advantage of his being here to have our likenesses drawn?"

The result of these opinions, sown broadcast in the town as if by the winds, was a devouring curiosity. All who had a right to call on the Hochons promised themselves that they would do so that evening, to inspect the Parisians. The arrival of these two persons in a stagnant town like Issoudun was as startling as the fall of the Log among the Frogs.

After placing his mother's luggage and his own in the two attic rooms, and looking round them, Joseph studied the silent house, where the stairs, walls, and panels, bare of adornment, shed a chill, and there was not a thing beyond what was strictly necessary. But when, on going downstairs, he found Monsieur Hochon himself cutting a slice of bread for each person, he understood for the first time Molière's "Harpagon."

"We should have done better at the inn," thought he.

The dinner confirmed his apprehensions. After a soup, so thin that quantity was evidently preferred to quality, a dish of bouilli was served—fresh-boiled beef—triumphantly wreathed with parsley. The vegetables cooked with it, served in a separate dish, were part of the bill of fare. The meat crowned the table, and was flanked by three other dishes; hard eggs on sorrel opposite the vegetables, and a salad, ready dressed with nut-oil, opposite little cups of custard flavored with burned oats as a substitute for vanilla—as much like vanilla as chicory is like Mocha. Butter, and radishes on little plates at the opposite ends, black radishes and gherkins, completed the display, which Madame Hochon highly approved. The good old lady nodded at her husband, as a hostess happy to see that, at any rate for the

first day, he had done things in style. The old man responded with a look and a shrug, easily interpreted to mean:

"You see what recklessness you lead me into!"

As soon as the bouilli had been dissected by Monsieur Hochon into slices as thin as the sole of your slipper, it was removed to make way for three pigeons. The wine was of the vintage of 1811. At a hint from her grandmother, Adolphine had graced each end of the table with a bunch of flowers.

"Well, make the best of a bad job!" thought the artist, as he looked at the table. And he began to eat like a man who had breakfasted at Vierzon at six in the morning off an execrable cup of coffee.

When Joseph had eaten his bread and asked for some more, Monsieur Hochon rose, slowly felt for a key in the depths of his coat-pocket, opened a cupboard behind him, flourished the stump of a twelve-pound loaf, ceremoniously cut off another slice, which he divided in two, put it on a plate, and passed the plate across the table to the young painter, with the silence and composure of an old soldier, who says to himself at the beginning of a battle, "Well, I may be dead by to-night."

Joseph took half the slice, and understood that he must never again ask for more bread. No member of the family was surprised at this scene, which to Joseph seemed so preposterous.

The conversation went on. Agathe heard that the house she was born in, her father's house before he had inherited that of the Descoings, had been bought by the Borniches, and she expressed a wish to see it again.

"The Borniches will call this evening, no doubt," said her godmother. "All the town will come to inspect you," she added to Joseph, "and they will ask you to their houses."

For dessert the maid brought in the famous soft cheeses of Touraine and le Berry, made of goats' milk, which so exactly reproduce, in a sort of niello, the veining of the

vine-leaves on which they are served that engraving might very well have been invented in Touraine. On each side of the little cheeses Gritte ceremoniously served some walnuts and some rocky biscuits.

"Come, Gritte, bring us some fruit," said Madame Hochon.

"Madame, there is no rotten fruit left," replied Gritte.

Joseph shouted with laughter, as if he had been in his studio with his own companions, for he understood at once that the precaution of beginning first on damaged fruit had degenerated into a habit.

"Oh, we can eat it all the same!" said he, with the dash of spirit of a man who feels that he must speak.

"Pray go for some, Monsieur Hochon," said the old lady.

Monsieur Hochon, much annoyed by the artist's remark, fetched some small peaches, some pears, and late plums.

"Adolphine, go and cut some grapes," said Madame Hochon to her granddaughter.

Joseph looked at the two young men with an expression that seemed to say, "And is it to such a diet as this that you owe your blooming appearance?"

Baruch understood this keen glance, and could not help smiling, for his cousin Hochon and he had displayed moderate appetites. The food at home was a matter of indifference to men who supped three times a week at la Cognette's. And just before dinner, Baruch had had notice that the Grand Master of the Order had summoned a full meeting at midnight to have a splendid supper, as he required their co-operation.

This banquet of welcome offered to his guests by old Hochon explains how necessary these midnight festivities were for the maintenance of these two great fellows, who had fine appetites, and who never missed one.

"We will have some liqueurs in the drawing-room," said Madame Hochon, rising, and signing to Joseph to give her his arm. They went out first, and she was able to say to the painter, "Well, my poor boy, your dinner will not give

you an indigestion; but I had great difficulty in procuring it for you! You will find lenten fare here; just enough to eat to keep you alive, and that is all. So just make the best of it."

The frank simplicity of the old lady, thus pronouncing judgment on her own house, pleased the painter.

"I shall have lived fifty years with that old man without ever having heard twenty crowns jingle in my purse. Oh, if it were not for the hope of saving your fortune, I would never have invited your mother and you to stay in my prison!"

"But how is it that you are still alive?" said the painter artlessly, with the light-heartedness that never deserts a French artist.

"Ah, indeed!" said she. "I pray."

Joseph felt a thrill as he heard these words, which gave the old woman such dignity in his eyes that he drew back two or three steps to look in her face; he saw it radiant, full of such tender serenity, that he said to her—

"I will paint your portrait—"

"No, no," said she. "I have hated life on earth too much to wish to remain on it in a picture."

As she spoke the sad words in a light tone, she took from a cupboard a flask containing black-currant brandy, a household liqueur prepared by herself, for she had had the recipe from the famous Sisterhood who also created the Issoudun cakes, one of the greatest achievements of French confectionery, which no *chef*, cook, pastry-cook, or confectioner has ever been able to imitate. Monsieur de Rivière, the Ambassador to Constantinople, ordered immense numbers every year for Mahmoud's seraglio. Adolphine held a small lacquer tray full of little old-fashioned glasses with an engraved pattern and a gilt rim; as her grandmother filled them, she carried them round.

"Glasses round.—Father will have some!" cried Agathe gayly, reminded of her young days by this time-honored ceremony.

"Hochon will go presently to his club to read the papers; we shall have a little time to ourselves," said the old lady in a low voice.

In fact, ten minutes later, the three women and Joseph were left to themselves in the drawing-room. Its floor was never polished, only swept, while the tapestried panels, in oak frames, with deep ogees and moldings, and all the simple heavy furniture, stood before Madame Bridau exactly as she had left them. The Monarchy, the Revolution, the Empire, and the Restoration, respecters of few things, had respected this room, where their splendors and disasters had left not a trace.

"Ah, godmother, my life has been cruelly storm-tossed in comparison with yours!" exclaimed Madame Bridau, surprised to see even a canary bird, which she had known alive, stuffed and standing on the chimney-shelf between the old clock and the old brass branched candlesticks and silver taper-stands.

"My child," replied the old lady, "storms are in the heart. The greater and the more needed is our resignation, the greater must our inmost struggles be.—But we will not talk of me, but of your affairs. You are indeed exactly opposite the foe," she went on, pointing to the windows of old Rouget's house.

"They are sitting down to dinner," remarked Adolphine.

The young girl, almost a recluse, was constantly looking out of window, hoping to catch some light shed by chance on the enormities ascribed to Maxence Gilet, to la Rabouilleuse, and to Jean-Jacques, of which a hint now and again reached her ears when she was sent away while they were discussed. The old lady now told her granddaughter to leave her with Monsieur and Madame Bridau till the first visitor should come.

"For I know my Issoudun," said she, looking at the two Parisians; "we shall have ten or twelves batches of inquisitive callers this evening."

Madame Hochon had hardly had time to give them the events and particulars concerning the extraordinary influence exerted over Jean-Jacques Rouget by la Rabouilleuse and Maxence Gilet—not with the synthetic brevity with which they have here been narrated, but with the addition of a thousand comments, descriptions, and hypotheses lent to them by good and evil tongues in the town—when Adolphine announced the approach of the Borniches, the Beaussiers, the Lousteau-Prangins, the Fichets, the Goddet-Héraus, fourteen persons in all, who loomed in the distance.

"So, you see, my dear child," said the old lady in conclusion, "that it will be no small matter to drag this fortune out of the wolf's mouth—"

"It seems to me so difficult, with such a scoundrel as you have described, and a slut like that young witch, that it must be impossible," said Joseph. "We should have to remain at Issoudun a year at least to combat their influence and undo their power over my uncle.—No fortune is worth so much vexation, to say nothing of having to stoop to a thousand dishonorable tricks. My mother has but a fortnight's leave of absence; her appointment is a certainty, and she must not risk losing it. In the month of October I have some important work to do which Schinner has secured for me in a nobleman's house. And to me, Madame, you see, fortune lies in my paint-brushes."

This speech was received with profound amazement. Madame Hochon, though relatively superior to the place she lived in, did not believe in painting. She looked at her goddaughter, and again grasped her hand.

"This Maxence is a second edition of Philippe," said Joseph in his mother's ear; "but with more policy, more style than Philippe has."—"Well, Madame," he added aloud, "we shall not long put Monsieur Hochon out of his way by staying here."

"Oh, you are young; you know nothing of the world," said the old lady. "In a fortnight, with a little political

manœuvring, you may do something. Listen to my advice, and act as I may direct you."

"Oh, very gladly!" cried Joseph. "I am conscious of ineffable incapacity in domestic tactics; and I am sure I do not know what Desroches himself would advise us to do if, for instance, my uncle refuses to see us to-morrow."

Mesdames Borniche, Goddet-Hérau, Beaussier, Lousteau-Prangin, and Fichet, graced by their husbands, now came in.

After the usual greetings, and when the fourteen persons had found seats, Madame Hochon could not avoid introducing to them her goddaughter Agathe and Joseph Bridau. Joseph remained on a sofa, and gave himself up to a covert study of the sixty faces which from half-past five till nine came to sit to him gratis, as he said to his mother. And Joseph's attitude throughout this evening in regard to the patricians of Issoudun did nothing to alter the views of the little town in regard to him. Every one left chilled by his ironical gaze, uncomfortable under his smile, or alarmed by his face, sinister, no doubt, to people who could not discern the eccentricity of genius.

At ten o'clock, when everybody went to bed, the old lady detained her goddaughter in her room till midnight. Then, knowing that they were alone, the two women, while telling each other the troubles of their lives, made an exchange of suffering. As she measured the vastness of the solitude in which all the powers of a beautiful soul had been spent unrecognized, as she heard the last utterances of an intelligence that had missed its opportunities, as she learned the sorrows of a heart so essentially generous and charitable, but whose generosity and charity had never had full play, Agathe no longer regarded herself as the more unfortunate of the two, as she perceived how much mitigation and minor happiness her Paris life had afforded in the midst of the discipline appointed her by God.

"You who are so pious, godmother, tell me my faults," said she. "Tell me what it is that God is punishing me for."

"He prepares us, my child," replied the old lady as midnight struck.

At midnight the Knights of Idlesse were making their way, one by one, like shades, to meet under the trees of the Boulevard Baron, and walked to and fro, talking in low whispers.

"What is up?" was the first question of each new comer.

"I fancy," said François, "that all Max intends is to give us a feed."

"No. Matters are looking awkward for him and la Rabouilleuse. He has concocted some plot against these Parisians, no doubt—"

"It would be good fun to pack them off again."

"My grandfather," said Baruch, "is in a fright already at having two more mouths to fill, and he would jump at any excuse—"

"Well, Knights!" cried Max in a low voice as he came up, "why are you gazing at the stars? They will not distil kirsch on our heads. To la Cognette's! To la Cognette's!"

"To la Cognette's!"

The shout as of one voice produced a fearful din, that swept across the little town like the hue of soldiers rushing on an assault; then utter silence fell. Next morning more than one person would say to his neighbor: "Did you hear that fearful yell last night at about one o'clock? I thought there was a fire somewhere."

A supper worthy of la Cognette cheered the eyes of the two-and-twenty guests, for the Order was present in all its numbers. At two in the morning, when they were beginning to *siroter*, a word of their own peculiar slang, fairly descriptive of the art of drinking in sips and slowly tasting the wine, Max addressed the meeting:

"My dear boys, this morning, in consequence of the never-to-be-forgotten trick we played with Fario's cart, your Grand Master was so grossly insulted on a point of honor by that base corn-dealer, and a Spaniard to boot—Ah, those

hulks!—that I am determined to let that miscreant feel the whole weight of my vengeance, within the strict limits of our sports. After considering the matter all day, I have hit on a plan for playing him a capital trick, a trick that is enough to drive him mad. While avenging the Order attacked in my person, we may feed certain animals worshipped by the Egyptians, little beasts which are, after all, God's creatures though men persecute them unjustly. Good comes of evil, and evil of good; such is the divine law! I require you each and all, under pain of your humble servant and Grand Master's displeasure, to procure, as secretly as possible, twenty rats, or if possible, lady rats expecting families by God's grace. You must collect your contingent within three days. If you can get more, the surplus will be acceptable. Keep these interesting rodents without food, for it is essential that the dear little beasts should be ravenously hungry. Observe, I include as rats, mice and field-mice. If we multiply twenty by twenty-two, we shall have more than four hundred accomplices, who, when turned out in the old church of the Capuchins, where Fario has stored all the seed corn he has just laid in, will consume a certain quantity of it. But we must look sharp!—Fario is to deliver a large parcel of seeds in a week; now what I want is that my Spanish friend, who is travelling round for orders, should find a fearful waste.

"Gentlemen, the merit of this invention is not mine," he went on, noting signs of general approbation. "'Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' This is an imitation of Samson's foxes in the Bible. But Samson was an incendiary, and consequently not a philanthropist; while we, like the Brahmins, are the protectors of a persecuted race. Mademoiselle Flore Brazier has already set all her mouse-traps, and Kouski, my right hand, is hunting field-mice.—I have spoken."

"I know," said Goddet junior, "where to get an animal as good as forty rats single-handed."

"What?"

"A squirrel."

"And I can contribute a small monkey who will eat corn till he bursts," said a novice.

"No good!" said Max. "It will be known where the beasts come from."

"In the course of the night," said young Beaussier, "we might bring in one pigeon from the pigeon-house of each farm in the neighborhood, by putting it through a hole made in the roof, and there soon would be thousands of pigeons."

"Well, then, for a week Fario's corn-store is the order of the night," said Gilet, smiling at the tall youth Beaussier junior. "You know that they are astir early at Saint-Paterne. Mind no one is to go there without having put the soles of his list-shoes on hind part before. Our good knight Beaussier, the inventor of the pigeon trick, takes the command. For my part, I will take care to leave my mark on the grain. I leave it to you to be quartermasters-general to the forces of rats. If the shop-boy sleeps in the old church, his companions must make him drunk; and do it cleverly, so as to get him far away from the banquet to be provided for the rodents."

"And you say nothing about the Parisians?" asked Goddet.

"Oh!" said Max, "they must be studied. At the same time, I will give my fine fowling-piece, that came to me from the Emperor, a first-class article from the Versailles factory —it is worth two thousand francs—to any one who will hit upon a plan for playing these Parisians some trick to get them into such bad odor with Monsieur and Madame Hochon that the old folks should pack them off, or that they should go of their own accord; without causing too much annoyance, however, to the ancestors of my good friends François and Baruch."

"All right, I will think it over," said young Goddet, who was passionately addicted to shooting.

"And if the inventor of the ploy does not want the gun, he may have my horse," added Maxence.

Thenceforth twenty brains were vainly racked to concoct some plot against Agathe and her son, in conformity with this programme. But the devil alone, or some chance, could succeed; the conditions of the case made it so difficult.

Next morning Agathe and Joseph came downstairs a minute before the second breakfast at ten o'clock. The meal called the first breakfast consisted of a cup of milk and a slice of bread and butter, eaten in bed, or on getting up.

While waiting for Madame Hochon, who, in spite of old age, carefully went through all the ceremonies employed in their toilet by the duchesses of Louis XV.'s reign, Joseph saw, on the threshold of the house opposite, Jean-Jacques Rouget standing squarely in the doorway. He, naturally, pointed him out to his mother, who could not recognize her brother, so little was he like what he had been when they parted.

"There is your brother," said Adolphine, who had given her grandmother her arm.

"What an idiot!" cried Joseph.

Agathe clasped her hands and looked up to heaven.

"What have they brought him to? Good Heavens! is that a man of fifty-seven?"

She wished to look at him attentively, and then saw Flore Brazier come up behind him, her hair dressed without a cap, and displaying, through the gauze of a kerchief trimmed with lace, snowy shoulders and a dazzling bosom; she was dressed as elaborately as a rich courtesan, wearing a tightly-fitting gown of grenadine—a silk stuff then very fashionable—with *gigot* sleeves, and magnificent bracelets on her wrists. A gold chain meandered over the bodice of la Rabouilleuse, who had brought Jean-Jacques his black silk cap that he might not catch cold—it was evidently a got-up scene.

"What a lovely woman!" cried Joseph. "Of a rare kind, too! Made to be painted, as we say! What flesh-tints, what splendid coloring! What a skin, what curves, and what

shoulders! She is a magnificent Caryatid And a perfect model for a Titian's Venus!"

To Adolphine and Madame Hochon this might have been Greek; but Agathe, behind her son, made a sign to them as much as to say that she was accustomed to this jargon.

"You think a woman lovely who is robbing you of a fortune!" exclaimed Madame Hochon.

"That does not prevent her being a splendid model! Exactly full enough, without the hips or bust having become coarse—"

"My dear, you are not in your studio," said Agathe. "Adolphine is here—"

"To be sure, I beg pardon; but, really, all the way from Paris along the road I saw none but apes—"

"But, my dear godmother," said Agathe, "how can I see my brother? For if that creature is with him—"

"Pooh!" said Joseph. "I will go to see him. For, indeed, I don't think him quite such an idiot if he has wit enough to gladden his eyes with a Venus worthy of Titian."

"If he were not an idiot," said Monsieur Hochon, coming in, "he would have married comfortably, have had a family, and you would have had no chance at all of his fortune. Some good comes out of evil."

"That is a good idea of your son's; he can go first to call on his uncle," said Madame Hochon. "He will give him to understand that if you go he must receive you alone."

"And so affront Mademoiselle Brazier?" said Monsieur Hochon. "No, no, Madame. Put up with this grievance. If you do not get the fortune, try to secure a legacy."

The Hochons were no match for Maxence Gilet. In the middle of breakfast the Pole arrived with a note from his master, Monsieur Rouget, addressed to his sister, Madame Bridau.

Here is the letter which Madame Hochon made her husband read:

MY DEAR SISTER—I hear through strangers of your arrival at Issoudun. I can guess the reason for your preferring

Monsieur and Madame Hochon's house to mine; but if you come to see me, you shall be received here as you ought to be. I should be the first to call on you but that my health compels me at present to keep the house. I offer you my affectionate respects. I should be delighted to meet your son, whom I shall hope to see at dinner with me to-day, for young men are less precise than women as to the company they meet. He will give me great pleasure by coming accompanied by Messieurs Baruch Borniche and François Hochon.

"Your affectionate brother,

"J.-J. ROUGET."

"Say that we are at breakfast, that Madame Bridau will send an answer presently, and the gentlemen accept the invitation," said Monsieur Hochon to the maid. And the old man laid his finger on his lip to impress silence on all the party.

When the house-door was shut, Monsieur Hochon, having no suspicion of the alliance between his grandsons and Maxence, shot one of his keenest glances at his wife and Agathe.

"He no more wrote that," said he, "than I am able to pay down twenty-five louis.—The soldier is our correspondent."

"What does it all mean?" said Madame Hochon. "Never mind, we will answer it. You, Monsieur," she added, turning to the painter, "will dine there, I hope; but if—"

The old lady stopped short at a look from her husband Seeing the warmth of his wife's affection for Agathe, old Hochon feared lest she should leave her goddaughter some legacy in the event of her losing all the Rouget property. Though he was fifteen years the elder, the miser hoped to survive her, and to see himself one day master of everything. This hope was his ruling idea. So Madame Hochon had rightly guessed that the way to extract some concessions from her husband was to threaten that she would make a will.

So Monsieur Hochon sided with his guests. The Rouget fortune, which hung in the balance, was in fact enormous; and his sense of social justice made him wish to see it in the hands of the natural heirs rather than grabbed by disreputable outsiders. Again, the sooner the business was settled, the sooner would he be rid of his visitors. Since the struggle, which till now had been only a scheme of his wife's, had actually begun between the rightful heirs and the unrighteous schemers, Monsieur Hochon's mind had waked up from the sleep induced by provincial life. Madame Hochon was quite agreeably surprised when, that very morning, she understood, from some kindly expression of old Hochon's with regard to her goddaughter, that this competent and wily auxiliary was on the side of the Bridaus.

By noon the combined talents of Monsieur and Madame Hochon, of Agathe and Joseph—a good deal surprised to find the two old people so careful in their choice of words—had brought to birth the following reply for the especial benefit of Flore and Maxence:

"My dear Brother—If I have waited thirty years without revisiting this town, or keeping up any intercourse with any one in it, not even with you, the fault lies not alone with the strange and false ideas my father had formed against me, but partly with the misfortunes and with the happiness of my life in Paris; for, though God made me a happy wife, He has sorely stricken me as a mother. You cannot but know that my son, your nephew Philippe, lies under a capital charge of treason in consequence of his devotion to the Emperor. Hence, you will not be surprised to hear that a widow, compelled to earn her living by accepting a humble employment in a lottery office, should have come to seek consolation and substantial help from those who have known her from her birth.

"The profession taken up by the son who is with me is one of those which demand great talent, great sacrifices, and long study before leading to any success. Glory precedes

fortune in this career. Is not this as much as to say that even if Joseph makes his name famous, he will still be poor?

"I, your sister, my dear Jean-Jacques, would have endured in silence the effects of our father's injustice, but forgive me as a mother for reminding you that you have two nephews—one who served on the Emperor's staff at the battle of Montereau, and fought with the Imperial Guard at Waterloo, and who is now in prison; the other who, from the age of thirteen, has been led by a vocation into a difficult though splendid career.

"So I thank you, my dear brother, with heartfelt warmth, for your letter, both on my own account and on Joseph's; he will certainly wait on you at your invitation. Ill health excuses everything, my dear Jean-Jacques; I will see you in your own house. A sister is always at home in her brother's house, whatever life he may choose to lead.

"Accept my affectionate regards,

"AGATHE ROUGET."

"There, the battle has begun. When you go there," said Monsieur Hochon, "you can speak plainly to him about his nephews."

The letter was delivered by Gritte, who returned in ten minutes to report to her superiors all she had been able to see or hear, as is the custom in the provinces.

"Madame," said she, "since last evening, all that part of the house that Madame had left—"

"Madame—who?" asked old Hochon.

"Oh, they call la Rabouilleuse Madame over there," replied Gritte.

"She had left the drawing-room and everything that was about Monsieur Rouget in a dreadful state; but since yesterday the house is all to rights again, as it was before Monsieur Maxence came there. You could see yourself in everything. Védie told me that Kouski was out on horseback by six this morning; he came in about nine, bringing in provisions. Indeed, there is to be the best of dinners, a dinner fit for the

Archbishop of Bourges. Little pans are standing in big pans, and everything in order in the kitchen. 'I mean to treat my nephew handsomely,' the old fellow said, and made them tell him all they were doing. The Rougets were highly flattered by the letter, it would seem; Madame came out to tell me so. Oh, she is dressed! Such a dress! I never saw anything handsomer! Madmae has diamonds in her ears—two diamonds worth a thousand crowns apiece, Védie told me—and lace! and rings on her fingers, and bracelets good enough for a shrine, and a silk gown fit for an altar-front! And then says she to me: 'Monsieur is delighted to think his sister is so ready and willing, and I hope she will allow us to entertain her as she deserves. And we look forward to her good opinion of us when she hears how welcome we make her son.. And Monsieur is most impatient to see his nephew.' —Madame had little black satin shoes and stockings! Oh, really wonderful. Like flowers on the silk, and holes like lace, and you see the pink flesh through. In short, she is up to the nines! With such a dear little apron in front of her, that Védie told me that apron alone cost two years of our wages—"

"Come, come, we must get ourselves up!" said the artist, smiling.

"Well, Monsieur Hochon, and what are you thinking about?" said the old lady, when Gritte had left the room.

Madame Hochon pointed to her husband sitting with his head in his hands, and his elbows on the arms of his chair, lost in thought.

"You have a Maître Bonin to deal with," said the old man. "You, young man, with your notions, are no match in a struggle with a scoundrel of such skill as Maxence. Whatever I may say, you are sure to make some blunder; but, at any rate, tell me this evening all you see, hear, and do. Go—and God be with you! Try to have a few minutes alone with your uncle. If, in spite of all you can do, you fail in that, it will throw some light on their scheme; but if you are alone with him for one instant—alone, without being

overheard, mind you!—you must speak very plainly to him as to his position—which is not a becoming one—and plead your mother's cause."

At four o'clock Joseph crossed the straits which divided the Hochons' house from the Rougets', the avenue of sickly lime-trees, two hundred feet long, and as wide as the Grande Narette. When the nephew appeared, Kouski, in freshly blacked boots, black trousers, white waistcoat, and black coat, led the way to announce him.

The table was ready laid in the sitting-room, and Joseph, who easily identified his uncle, went straight up to him and embraced him, bowing to Flore and Maxence.

"We have never met since I came into the world, my dear uncle," said the painter gayly. "But better late than never."

"You are very welcome, my dear boy," said the old man, looking at his nephew with a bewildered air.

"Madame," said Joseph to Flore with an artist's enthusiasm, "this morning I was envying my uncle the pleasure he enjoys of admiring you every day."

"Is not she beautiful?" said the old man, his dull eyes almost sparkling.

"Beautiful enough to be a painter's model."

"Nephew," said the old man, his elbow being nudged by Flore, "this is Monsieur Maxence Gilet, a man who served the Emperor, like your brother, in the Imperial Guard."

Joseph rose and bowed.

"Your brother, I think, was a dragoon, and I was only a mud-crusher," said Maxence.

"On horseback or on foot," observed Flore, "you risked your skin all the same."

Joseph studied Max as narrowly as Max studied Joseph. Max was dressed like the young men of fashion of the day, for he had his clothes from Paris. A pair of sky-blue cloth trousers, very fully pleated, made the best of his feet by showing only the tips of his boots and his spurs. His waist was firmly held by a white waistcoat with fancy gold buttons,

laced behind to serve as a belt; this waistcoat, buttoning to the throat, set off his broad chest, and his black satin stock obliged him to hold his head up like a soldier. His black coat was extremely well cut. A handsome gold chain hung from his waistcoat pocket, where a flat watch scarcely showed. He was playing with one of the patent watch-keys just invented by Breguet.

"He is a very good-looking fellow!" said Joseph to himself, admiring as an artist the face full of life, the appearance of strength, and the keen gray eyes inherited by Max from his gentleman father. "My uncle must be a deadly old bore, and that handsome girl has sought compensation. It is a case of three in a boat, that is very clear."

At this moment Baruch and François came in.

"You have not yet seen the Tower of Issoudun?" said Flore to Joseph. "Well, if you like to take a little walk till dinner is ready, which will not be for an hour yet, we will show you the great curiosity of the town—"

"With pleasure," said the artist, unable to discern the smallest objection.

While Flore was putting on her bonnet, her gloves, and her cashmere shawl, Joseph suddenly caught sight of the pictures, and started to his feet as if some enchanter had touched him with his wand.

"Ah, ha! so you have pictures, uncle?" said he, looking at the one that had struck him.

"Yes," said the old fellow, "they came to me from the Descoings, who, during the Revolution, bought up some of the pickings of the convents and churches of le Berry."

But Joseph was not listening. He went from picture to picture.

"Magnificent!" he exclaimed. "Why, what a fine thing! That man did not spoil canvas. Bless me, why, better and better; as we see them at Nicolet's—"

"There are seven or eight more, very large ones, in the loft, that were kept for the sake of the frames," said Gilet.

"Let me see them," cried the artist, and Maxence took him to the loft.

Joseph came down in raptures. Max said a word in la Rabouilleuse's ear, and she led the old man to the window; Joseph caught these words spoken in an undertone, but still so that he could hear them:

"Your nephew is a painter; you can do nothing with these pictures. Be good-natured, and give them to him."

"It would seem," said Rouget, leaning on Flore's arm, and coming to the spot where his nephew stood in ecstasies before an Albano—"it would seem that you are a painter—"

"Only a smudger as yet," said Joseph.

"Whatever is that?" said Flore.

"A beginner," said Joseph.

"Well," said Jean-Jacques, "if these pictures can be of any use to you in your business, I will give them to you. . . . But without the frames. The frames are gilt, and then they are quaint; I will put—"

"Why, of course, uncle," cried Joseph, enchanted, "you will put copies into them, which I will send you, and which shall be of the same size."

"But that will take time, and you will want canvas and paints," said Flore. "It will cost you money. Come, Père Rouget, suppose you offer your nephew a hundred francs for each picture; there are twenty-seven here, and I think there are eleven more in the loft, which are enormous, and ought to cost double—say four thousand francs for the lot. Yes, your uncle may very well spend four thousand francs on the copies, since he is to keep the frames. You will have to get frames, too, and they say the frames cost more than the pictures; there is gold on them. . . . I say, Monsieur," Flore went on, shaking the old man's arm, "listen, that is not dear; your nephew will charge you four thousand francs for quite new pictures in the place of your old ones. . . . It is a civil way of making him a present of the money," said she in his ear. "He does not strike me as being very flush—"

"Very well, nephew, I will pay you four thousand francs for the copies—"

"No, no," said Joseph, honestly. "Four thousand francs and the pictures is too much; for the pictures, you see, are of value."

"Why, accept it, booby," said Flore, "since he is your uncle . . ."

"Very well, I accept it," said Joseph, quite bewildered, for he had recognized one picture as by Perugino.

So the artist looked quite gleeful as he went out, giving his arm to la Rabouilleuse, which perfectly suited Max's purpose. Neither Flore, nor Rouget, nor Max, nor any one at Issoudun had any idea of the value of the pictures, and the wily Max believed that he had purchased very cheaply Flore's triumph as she marched proudly arm in arm with her master's nephew, on the best possible terms with him, in the eyes of the astonished townsfolk. People came to their doors to see the victory of la Rabouilleuse over the family. This astounding fact made the deep sensation on which Max had built his hopes. So when the uncle and nephew went in at about five, the talk in every household was of the perfect alliance between Flore and Max and Père Rouget's nephew. And the story of the gift of the pictures and the four thousand francs was all over the town already.

The dinner, to which Lousteau, one of the judges, and the Mayor of Issoudun, was invited, was really splendid; it was one of the country meals which last five hours. The finest wines gave spirit to the conversation. Over the dessert, at nine o'clock, the painter, seated between Flore and Max, opposite his uncle, was almost hail-fellow with the officer, whom he thought the best of good souls. At eleven o'clock Joseph went home, a little screwed. As to old Rouget, Kouski carried him to bed dead drunk; he had eaten like a travelling actor, and drunk like the sands of the desert.

"Well, now," said Max, left alone with Flore, "is not this better than sulking with them? The Bridaus are well

received; they will get some little presents, and, loaded with favors, they can only sing our praises; they will go quietly away, and leave us quietly where we are. To-morrow morning Kouski and I between us will take out all those pictures, and send them over for the painter to see them when he wakes; we will put the frames in the loft, and have the room repapered with one of those varnished papers, with scenes on it from Télémaque, such as I saw at Monsieur Mouilleron's."

"Why, that will be ever so much prettier!" cried Flore.

Joseph did not wake till noon next day. From his bed he saw the pictures leaning one above another, having been brought in without his hearing anything. While he was examining them afresh, and recognizing them as masterpieces, studying the handling of each master, or finding their signatures, his mother went to thank her brother and to see him, urged to do so by old Hochon, who, knowing all the blunders committed by Joseph the evening before, despaired of the Bridaus' prospects.

"You have to deal with two very sharp customers. In all my life I never met with so sly a fox as that soldier. War is the making of these youths, it would seem. Joseph walked into the trap. He appeared arm in arm with la Rabouilleuse. They have shut his mouth, no doubt, with wine, some rubbishy pictures, and four thousand francs. Your artist has not cost Maxence dear."

The cunning old man had laid down a line of conduct for his wife's goddaughter, instructing her to seem to agree with Maxence and cajole Flore, so as to become to some extent familiar with her, and obtain a few minutes' talk alone with her brother. Madame Bridau was very well received by Jean-Jacques, tutored by Flore. The old man was in bed, ill from the excesses of the previous evening. As Agathe could not attack him on serious questions at the very first moment, Max had thought it correct and handsome to leave the brother and sister to themselves. He had calculated

judiciously. Poor Agathe found her brother so ill that she would not deprive him of Mademoiselle Brazier's attentions.

"Besides," she said to the old man, "I should wish to know the person to whom I am indebted for my brother's happiness."

These words gave the poor fellow evident pleasure; he rang and sent for Madame Brazier. Flore, as may be supposed, was not far off. The female antagonists exchanged salutes. La Rabouilleuse displayed the most obsequious care, the tenderest attentions; she thought Monsieur's head was too low, and rearranged the pillows; she was like a wife of yesterday. And the old man overflowed with emotion.

"We owe you much gratitude, Mademoiselle," said Agathe, "for all the marks of attachment you have so long given to my brother, and for the care with which you provide for his happiness."

"It is very true, my dear Agathe," said the old man, "she made me first know happiness; and she is a woman full of admirable qualities."

"And so, brother, you cannot reward her too highly; you ought to have made her your wife. Yes! I am too religious a woman not to wish that I might see you obey the precepts of religion. You would both be the happier if you were not at war with law and morality. I came here, my dear brother, to appeal for help in very great trouble; but do not imagine that we intended to make the slightest remarks on the way in which you may dispose of your fortune."

"Madame," said Flore, "we know that your father was unjust to you. Your brother can tell you," she added, staring hard at her victim, "that the only quarrels we have ever had, he and I, have been about you. I tell Monsieur that he owes you part of the fortune of which you were robbed by my poor benefactor—for he was my benefactor, your father was," and she put on a tearful voice, "and I shall never forget him—but your brother, Madame, has listened to reason—"

"Yes," said old Rouget, "when I make my will, you will not be forgotten—"

"We will not talk of that, brother; you do not know yet what my character is—"

From these beginnings the upshot of this first visit may be imagined. Rouget invited his sister to dinner for the next day but one.

During these three days the Knights of Idlesse caught an enormous number of rats, mice, and field-mice, which were turned out starving one fine night among the seed-corn, to the number of four hundred and thirty-six, among them many mothers with young. Not satisfied with having quartered these pensioners on Fario, the Knights made some holes in the roof of the old chapel, and put in ten pigeons brought from ten different farmsteads. The creatures held high festival, with all the greater freedom because Fario's boy was led away by another young rascal, with whom he drank from morning till night, taking no care whatever of his master's merchandise.

Madame Bridau, in opposition to old Hochon's opinion, believed that her brother had not yet made his will; she purposed asking him what his intentions were with regard to Mademoiselle Brazier, on the first opportunity she might find of taking a walk with him alone; for Max and Flore constantly beguiled her with this hope, which was always deceived.

Though the Knights of the Order all tried to hit on a scheme for putting the two Parisians to flight, they devised nothing but impossible follies.

Hence at the end of a week, half of the time the Bridaus were to spend in Issoudun, they were no further forward than on the first day.

"Your lawyer does not know what a country town is," said old Hochon to Madame Bridau. "What you came here to do cannot be done in fourteen days, nor in fourteen months. You would have to be constantly with your brother, and instil into him some ideas of religion. You

can only undermine the fortress guarded by Flore and Maxence by sapping it through a priest. That is my opinion, and it is high time you should act on it."

"You have strange ideas of the priesthood," said Madame Hochon to her husband.

"Oh!" cried the old man. "There you are, you godly people!"

"God will not bless any endeavor that is based on sacrilege," said Madame Bridau. "To make use of religion for such a— Oh! We should be worse than Flore!"

This conversation took place at breakfast, and François and Baruch both listened with open ears.

"Sacrilege!" cried old Hochon. "But if some good Abbé, as clever as some I have known, understood the predicament in which you stand, he would not regard it as sacrilege to lead home to God your brother's erring soul, to bring him to true repentance for his sins, to persuade him to send away the woman who is the cause of the scandal—providing for her, of course—to point out to him that his conscience would rest in peace if he only left a few thousand francs a year to the Archbishop's little Seminary, and the remainder of his fortune to his legitimate heirs."

The passive obedience exacted by the old miser from his children, and handed down to his grandchildren, who had indeed been left to his guardianship, and for whom he was amassing a large fortune—doing by them, he was wont to say, as he would do by himself—did not allow of the faintest sign of astonishment or disapproval on the part of Baruch and François; but they exchanged glances full of meaning, telling each other how fatal this idea would be to Max's interests.

"The truth is, Madame," said Baruch, "if you wish to inherit your brother's property, the only real way is this—you must remain at Issoudun as long as is necessary to employ him—"

"Mother," Joseph put in, "you will do well to write all this to Desroches. For my part, I look for nothing

more from my uncle than what he has so kindly given me."

After assuring himself of the great value of the thirty-nine pictures, Joseph had carefully unmounted the canvases, had pasted paper over them, laid them one over another flat in a huge case, and addressed it by carrier to Desroches, to whom he meant to send a letter of advice. This precious load had been sent off the day before.

"You are cheaply paid off," said Monsieur Hochon.

"But I shall have no difficulty in getting a hundred and fifty thousand francs for the pictures," said Joseph.

"A painter's notion!" said Monsieur Hochon, looking dubiously at Joseph.

"Listen," said Joseph, turning to his mother, "I am going to write to Desroches and explain the state of affairs here. If he advises you to stay, you shall stay. As to your place in the office, we can always find something else as good—"

"My dear boy," said Madame Hochon, as they rose from table, "I do not know what your uncle's pictures may be, but they ought to be good, judging by the places they came from. If they are worth even forty thousand francs, a thousand francs apiece, tell nobody. Though my grandchildren are discreet and well brought up, they might, without meaning any mischief, talk about this supposed treasure-trove; all Issoudun would hear of it, and the foe must not suspect the truth. You really behave like a child!"

In point of fact, by midday many persons in Issoudun, and foremost of all Maxence Gilet, had been informed of Joseph's opinion, which led to a great hunt for old pictures that had lain forgotten, and to the disinterment of some execrable daubs. Max repented of having prompted the old man to give away the pictures; and his rage against the rightful heirs, on learning old Hochon's scheme, was increased by what he called his stupidity. Religious influence on this feeble creature was the only thing to be dreaded. Hence the warning given him by his two allies

confirmed Max in his determination to realize all Rouget's mortgages, and to borrow on his land so as to invest in State securities at once. But he considered the necessity for getting rid of the Parisians as even more pressing. Now the talents of a Mascarille or a Scapin would have found this a hard problem to solve.

Flore, counselled by Max, began to say that Monsieur tired himself too much by taking walks; that at his age he needed carriage exercise. This was necessary as a pretext for the expeditions to be made, without the neighbors knowing it, to Bourges, Vierzon, Châteauroux, and Vatan, whereever this scheme for calling in his investments might require that Rouget, Max, and Flore should go. So by the end of the week all Issoudun was startled by the news that Père Rouget had sent to Bourges for a carriage, a step which the Knights of Idlesse interpreted in favor of la Rabouilleuse. Flore and Max purchased a hideous travelling-chaise with rickety windows and a split-leather hood, that had seen two-and-twenty years, and nine campaigns; this they bought at a sale on the death of a colonel, a great friend of Marshal Bertrand's, who, during the absence of the Emperor's faithful follower, had undertaken the charge of his estates in le Berry. This vehicle, painted dark green, was not unlike a barouche, but the pole had been altered and shafts substituted, so that it could be drawn by one horse. It was now one of those carriages which reduced fortunes have made so fashionable, which, indeed, were honestly designated as *demi-fortunes*, for they were originally called *seringues*. The lining of this *demi-fortune*, sold as a barouche, was moth-eaten; the trimmings were like a pensioner's stripes; it rattled like old iron; but it cost no more than four hundred and fifty francs, and Max bought of the troops in garrison at Bourges a strong, well-broken mare to draw it. He had this vehicle repainted dark brown, and found a fairly good set of second-hand harness, and the town of Issoudun was agitated from top to bottom, on the watch for Père Rouget's "turn-out."

The first time the good man made use of his barouche

the noise brought every household to the front door, and all the windows were full of peeping heads. The second time he drove as far as Bourges, where, to avoid all further trouble in connection with the transactions, advised—or, if you will, commanded—by Flore Brazier, he signed in the notary's office a power of attorney in favor of Maxence Gilet, enabling him to transfer all the moneys mentioned in the document. Flore undertook to settle with Monsieur as to the loans in Issoudun and the immediate neighborhood. Rouget went to the first notary in Bourges and desired him to find him a hundred and forty thousand francs on the security of his land

No one at Issoudun knew anything about these proceedings, so quietly and cleverly carried out. Max, a good horseman, could get to Bourges and back between five in the morning and five in the afternoon on his horse, and Flore never left the old man. Old Rouget had consented without demur to the alterations which Flore had suggested to him; but he insisted that the bond bearing fifty thousand francs a year interest should stand as life-interest only in Mademoiselle Brazier's name, and that the capital should remain his absolutely. The tenacity displayed by the old man in the private struggle which arose over this question made Max very uneasy, for he fancied he could discern in it some reflections inspired by the sight of his natural heirs.

In the midst of these great changes, which Max hoped to conceal from the prying townsfolk, he forgot the corn-dealer. Fario was preparing to deliver his orders, after much travelling and bargaining, with a view to raise the price of seed-corn. But the day after his return to Issoudun, living opposite the Capuchin chapel, he saw the roof black with pigeons. He cursed himself for having neglected to examine the roof, and hastily went across to his storehouse, where he found half his corn devoured. Myriads of traces left by mice, rats, and field-mice betrayed another cause of the ruin. The church was a perfect Noah's ark. But the Spaniard turned as white as linen with fury

when, on trying to calculate the extent of the loss and damage, he discovered that the lower strata of grain were soaked and sprouting, from a quantity of water having been injected into the heart of the corn-heaps by means of a tin tube—an idea of Max's. Pigeons and rats might be accounted for by animal instinct; but in this last piece of malice the hand of man was evident.

Fario sat down on an altar-step in a side chapel, and hid his head in his hands. After half an hour's meditations—a Spaniard's meditations—on looking up, he saw the squirrel which young Goddet had insisted on placing there as boarder playing with its tail on the transom supporting the roof-beam. The Spaniard rose calmly, showing his shop-clerk a face as impassive as an Arab's. Fario made no lamentation. He went home, found some laborers to pack the good corn, and spread what was damp in the sun to dry, so as to save as much as possible; then he set to work to deliver his orders, calculating the loss at three-fifths. But as his own transactions had sent prices up he lost again in repurchasing those three-fifths; thus his total loss was of more than half.

The corn-dealer, who had no enemies, unerringly attributed this piece of revenge to Gilet. It was clear to him that Max and some others, the inventors of so many nocturnal pranks, had undoubtedly dragged his cart up to the tower, and amused themselves by ruining him: his loss, indeed, amounted to a thousand crowns, almost all the capital he had laboriously accumulated since the peace. Inspired by the hope of revenge, the man put forth all the perseverance and acumen of a spy who has been promised a handsome reward. Lurking in ambush by night in the town, he obtained absolute proof of the proceedings of the Knights of Idlesse; he saw them, he counted them; he watched their trysts, and their suppers at la Cognette's; then he hid himself to witness one of their tricks, and became familiar with their nocturnal doings.

In spite of his rides and his anxieties, Max would not neglect this business of the night; in the first place, to pre-

vent any one suspecting the grand financial operations carried on with Père Rouget's investments; and, in the second place, to keep his friends up to the mark. Now the Order had agreed to achieve a stroke which should be talked of for years. On a certain night every watch-dog in the town and suburbs was to have a pill of poison. Fario overheard them as they came out of la Cognette's, chuckling beforehand over the success of this practical joke, and the universal mourning to be caused by this massacre of the innocents. Besides, what fears this general execution would give rise to, by hinting at sinister designs on the houses thus deprived of their guardians!

"Fario's cart will be quite forgotten perhaps," said Goddet.

Fario no longer needed this speech to confirm his suspicions; besides, he had laid his plans.

After a stay of three weeks, Agathe, like Madame Hochon, recognized the truth of the old miser's views—it would take years to counteract the influence exerted over her brother by la Rabouilleuse and Max. Agathe had made no progress in Jean-Jacques' confidence; she had never been left alone with him. On the contrary, Mademoiselle Brazier triumphed over the heirs by taking Agathe out driving in the carriage, seated by her on the back seat, while Monsieur Rouget and his nephew sat in front. Mother and son anxiously awaited a reply to their confidential letter to Desroches.

On the very eve of the day when the watch-dogs were to be poisoned, Joseph, who was dying of weariness at Issoudun, received two letters—one from Schinner, the great painter, whose age allowed of a closer and more intimate acquaintance than with Gros, their master, and the other from Desroches. This was the first, bearing the stamp of Beaumont-sur-Oise:

"My dear Joseph—I have finished the most important paintings in the Chateau de Presles for the Comte de Sérizy.

I have left the borders and decorative panels; and I have so strongly recommended you to the Count, and to Grindot, his architect, that you have only to pack up your brushes and come. The prices agreed on will satisfy you. I am off to Italy with my wife, so you can have Mistigris to help you. The young rascal is clever; I place him at your service. He is as lively as a Pierrot already at the idea of enjoying himself at Presles. Farewell, my dear Joseph; if I am away and send nothing to the next Salon, you must fill my place. Yes, dear Jojo, your picture is a masterpiece, I am sure of it; but a masterpiece that will raise a hue and cry of 'Romanticism!' and you are preparing a life for yourself like that of the devil in holy water. But, after all, as that rogue Mistigris says—he transposes or puns on every proverb—life is bad to beat. What on earth are you doing at Issoudun? Farewell.—Your friend, SCHINNER."

This was Desroches' letter:

"MY DEAR JOSEPH—Your Monsieur Hochon seems to me an old man of great good sense, and you give me a high idea of his intelligence; he is perfectly right. And, since you ask my opinion, I think your mother should stay at Issoudun with Madame Hochon, paying a small sum, say four hundred francs a year, as compensation for her board. Madame Bridau, I should say, should be entirely guided by Monsieur Hochon's advice. But your excellent mother will be full of scruples in opposition to people who have none, and whose conduct shows a masterly policy. That Maxence is a dangerous fellow, you are right there; he is a man of far stronger temper than Philippe. This rascal makes his vices serve his fortunes; he does not amuse himself for nothing, like your brother, whose follies were never of any use. All you tell me appals me, for I could not do much by going to Issoudun. Monsieur Hochon, acting through your mother, will be of more use than I can be.

"As for you, you may as well come home; you are of no

good at all in a business requiring constant alertness, minute observation, servile attentions, discretion in speech, and dissimulation in looks—all quite antipathetic to an artist. If they tell you there is no will, they have had one made a long time since, you may be sure. But wills are not irrevocable; and as long as your imbecile uncle lives, he will certainly be open to the influence of remorse and religion. Your fortune will be the result of a pitched battle between the Church and la Rabouilleuse. A moment will inevitably come when that woman will lose her power over the old man, and religion will be all-powerful. So long as your uncle has made nothing over to them by deed of gift, nor altered his investments and holdings, at the moment when religion gets the upper hand everything will be possible.

"You had better beg Monsieur Hochon to keep an eye as far as possible on your uncle's possessions. It is important to ascertain whether he holds mortgages, and how and in whose name the deeds are drawn. It is so easy to fill an old man with fears for his life when he is stripping himself of his property in favor of strangers, that a rightful heir with a very little cunning can nip such spoliations in the bud. But is your mother, with her ignorance of the world, her disinterestedness, and her religious ideas, a likely person to manage such an intrigue?

"In short, I can only explain the position. What you have done so far must have given the alarm, and perhaps your antagonists are taking steps to protect themselves."

"That is what I call sound advice, kindly given!" cried Monsieur Hochon, proud of finding himself appreciated by a Paris attorney.

"Oh, Desroches is a capital good fellow," said Joseph.

"It might be useful to show that letter to the two women," said the old man.

"Here it is," said Joseph, giving the letter to Hochon. "As for me, I will be off to-morrow, and will go to take leave of my uncle."

"Ah!" said Monsieur Hochon, "I see that in a postscript Monsieur Desroches desires you to burn the letter."

"Burn it after showing it to my mother," said the painter.

Joseph Bridau dressed, crossed the little avenue, and was shown in to his uncle, who was just finishing breakfast. Max and Flore were at table with him.

"Do not disturb yourself, my dear uncle; I have come to take leave of you."

"You are going?" said Max with a look at Flore.

"Yes, I have some work to do at Monsieur de Sérizy's chateau, and I am all the more eager because he has a long enough arm to be of service to my poor brother with the Supreme Court."

"Well, well; work," said the old man, with a stupid look, and indeed Rouget seemed to Joseph extraordinarily altered. "You must work. I am sorry you are going—"

"Oh, my mother will remain some time yet," replied Joseph.

Max gave his lips a twist, which conveyed to the housekeeper, "They are going to act on the plan Baruch spoke of."

"I am very glad I came," Joseph went on, "for I have had the pleasure of making your acquaintance, and you have enriched my studio."

"Yes, indeed!" said la Rabouilleuse, "instead of enlightening your uncle as to the value of the pictures, which is said to be more than a hundred thousand francs, you packed them off to Paris pretty quick. Poor, dear man, he is like a child. . . . Why, I have just been told that there is at Bourges a little Poulet—I mean a Poussin—which was in the Cathedral before the Revolution, and that alone is worth thirty thousand francs."

"That was not right, nephew," said the old man, at a nod from Max, which Joseph could not see.

"Come now, honestly," said the soldier, laughing, "on your honor, what do you suppose your pictures are worth? By Jove! you have jockeyed your uncle very prettily. Well, you had a right to do it. Uncles are made to be plun-

dered. Nature bestowed no uncles on me; but, by all that's holy, if I had any, I would not spare them!"

"Did you know, Monsieur," asked Flore of Rouget, "how much your pictures were worth?—How much did you say, Monsieur Joseph?"

"Well," said the painter, turning as red as a beetroot, "the pictures are worth a good round sum."

"It is said that you valued them at a hundred and fifty thousand francs to Monsieur Hochon. Is that true?"

"Yes," said the painter, as candid as a child.

"And had you any intention," said Flore to the old man, "of giving your nephew a hundred and fifty thousand francs?"

"Never, never," cried Rouget, on whom Flore had fixed a steady eye.

"It is quite easily settled," said the painter. "I will send them back to you, uncle."

"No, no, keep them," said the old fellow.

"I will send them back, uncle," repeated Joseph, offended by the insulting silence of Maxence Gilet and Flore Brazier. "I have in my brush the means of making my fortune, without owing anything to anybody—even to my uncle. I wish you good day, Mademoiselle. Good-morning, Monsieur."

And Joseph recrossed the road in a state of irritation which an artist may conceive of. All the Hochon family were in the sitting-room. Seeing Joseph gesticulating and muttering to himself, they inquired what was the matter. Then, before Baruch and François, the painter, as open as the day, repeated the scene he had just gone through, which, in a couple of hours, was the talk of the whole town, every one embroidering the story with more or less impudent additions. Some maintained that the painter had been roughly handled by Max, others that he had been insolent to Mademoiselle Brazier, and that Max had turned him out of the house.

"Oh, what a child your boy is!" said Hochon to Madame Bridau. "The simple fellow has been fooled by a scene got

up for the day when he should be leaving. Why, Max and la Rabouilleuse have known for this fortnight past what the value of the pictures is, since Joseph was so silly as to mention it in the presence of my grandsons, who were only too eager to repeat it to all the world. Your artist ought to have left without notice."

"My son is right to restore the pictures if they are so valuable," said Agathe.

"If they are worth two hundred thousand francs, by his account," said old Hochon, "he is an idiot for allowing himself to be compelled to return them; for, at any rate, you would have had that much of the property, whereas, as matters stand, you will get nothing!—And this is almost reason enough for your brother to refuse to see you again."

Between midnight and one in the morning the Knights of Idlesse began their distribution of free rations to the dogs of the town. This memorable expedition ended only at three in the morning, and then the mischievous wretches met for supper at la Cognette's. At half-past four, in the morning twilight, they crept home. At the instant when Max turned out of the Rue de l'Avenier into the Grand' Rue, Fario, in ambush in a recess, stabbed him with a knife, aiming straight at the heart, pulled out the weapon, and fled to the moat by la Villate, where he wiped the knife on his handkerchief. The Spaniard then rinsed the handkerchief in the Borrowed Stream, and quietly went home to Saint-Paterne, where he went to bed, getting in at a window he had left unfastened; his new shop-boy woke him next morning, finding him sound asleep.

Max as he fell uttered a fearful shriek, too genuine to be misunderstood. Lousteau-Prangin, the son of a magistrate, a distant relation of the late sub-delegate, and young Goddet, who both lived at the bottom of the Grand' Rue, ran up the street again as fast as they could fly, saying, "Max is being killed! Help!"—But not a dog barked, and the inhabitants, inured to the tricks of these night-birds, did not stir.

When the two Knights came up Max had fainted. It was necessary to call up Monsieur Goddet the elder. Max had recognized Fario; but when, at five in the morning, he had fully recovered his wits, seeing himself surrounded by several persons, and feeling that the wound was not mortal, it suddenly struck him that he might take advantage of this attempted murder, and he exclaimed in a feeble voice, "I fancied I saw the eyes and face of that damned painter."

Upon this, Lousteau-Prangin ran off to fetch his father, the examining judge. Max was carried home by old Cognet, the younger Goddet, and two men whom they got out of bed. La Cognette and Goddet senior walked by the side of Max, who was laid on a mattress placed on two poles. Monsieur Goddet would do nothing till Max was in his bed.

Those who carried him naturally looked across at Hochon's house while Kouski was getting up, and they saw the woman-servant sweeping. In this house, as in most country places, the door was opened at a very early hour. The only words Max had spoken had roused suspicion, and the surgeon called across the road:

"Gritte, is Monsieur Joseph Bridau in bed?"

"Dear me," said she, "he went out at about half-past four; he walked up and down his room all night. I can't think what had taken him."

"A pretty fellow, is your painter!" said one and another.

And the party went in, leaving the woman in consternation; she had seen Max lying on the mattress, his shirt stained with blood, apparently dying.

What had "taken" Joseph and disturbed him all night, every artist will understand. He pictured himself as the talk of Issoudun; he was supposed to be a sharper, anything but what he wanted to be—an honest fellow, a hard-working artist. He would have given his own picture to be able to fly like a swallow to Paris and fling his uncle's pictures in Max's face. To be the victim and be thought the spoiler! What a mockery! And so at daybreak he had rushed out of the house, and was pacing the avenue of poplars leading

to Tivoli to walk off his excitement. While the innocent youth was promising himself, by way of consolation, never to set foot in the place again, Max was preparing for him a catastrophe full of horror to a sensitive mind.

As soon as Monsieur Goddet had probed the wound, and ascertained that the knife, turned by a little pocketbook, had happily missed aim, though it had left a frightful gash, he did as all doctors do, and especially country surgeons—he gave himself airs of importance, and "could not answer for the patient's life." Then, after dressing the rascally soldier's wound, he went away. This medical verdict he repeated to la Rabouilleuse, to Jean-Jacques Rouget, to Kouski, and Védie. La Rabouilleuse went back to her dear Max drowned in tears, while Kouski and Védie informed the crowd assembled at the door that the captain was as good as done for. The result of this news was that above two hundred persons collected in groups on the Place Saint-Jean and in the upper and lower Narette.

"I shall not be in bed a month," said Max to Flore, "and I know who struck the blow. But we will take advantage of it to get rid of the Parisians. I said I fancied I had recognized the painter; so pretend that I am dying, and try to have Joseph Bridau arrested; we will give him a taste of prison for a couple of days. I think I know the mother well enough to feel sure that she will be off to Paris then post-haste with her painter. Then we need no longer fear the volley of priests they talked of firing at our old idiot."

When Flore Brazier went down, she found the mob quite prepared to receive the impression she wished to make on them; she appeared before them with tears in her eyes, and remarked that the painter, "who for that matter looked bad enough for anything," had quarrelled fiercely with Max the day before about the pictures he had "boned" from Père Rouget. "That brigand—for you have only to look in his face to feel sure—thinks that if Max were out of the way, his uncle would leave him his fortune. As if," added she, "a brother wasn't closer than a nephew! Max is Doctor

Rouget's son; the old man owned up as much afore he died."

"Ay, he thought he could do the trick before he left; he planned it very neatly; he is going to-day," said one of the Knights of Idlesse.

"Max has not a single enemy in the town," observed another.

"Besides, Max recognized the painter," said la Rabouilleuse.

"Where is that damned Parisian? Let us find him," cried one and another.

"Find him? Why, he stole out of Monsieur Hochon's house before daylight."

One of the Knights at once ran off to find Monsieur Mouilleron. The crowd was still swelling, and voices grew threatening. Excited groups filled the whole of the Grande Narette; others stood in front of the Church of Saint-Jean. A mob filled the Villate gate where the lower Narette ends. It was impossible to stir above or below the Place Saint-Jean. It was like the fag-end of a procession. And Messieurs Lousteau-Prangin and Mouilleron, with the Superintendent of Police, the Lieutenant of the Gendarmerie, and his sergeant with two gendarmes, had some difficulty in getting to the spot, which they reached between two hedges of the populace, whose shouts and yells could not fail to prejudice them against the "Parisian," to whom circumstantial evidence pointed so strongly though he was unjustly accused.

After an interview between Max and the lawyers, Monsieur Mouilleron sent the Superintendent of Police and the sergeant, with one gendarme, to examine what, in the language of police reports, is called the Scene of the Crime. Then Mouilleron and Lousteau-Prangin, escorted by the lieutenant, crossed from Père Rouget's house to Monsieur Hochon's, which was guarded at the garden entrance by two gendarmes, while two more were posted at the street door. The mob was still collecting; the whole town was in a hubbub in the Grand' Rue.

Gritte had long since flown, breathless with terror, to her master's room, exclaiming:

"Monsieur, they are going to rob the house.—All the town is in a riot!—Monsieur Maxence Gilet is killed; he is going to die!—And they say that it was Monsieur Joseph that stabbed him!"

Monsieur Hochon hastily dressed and came down; but seeing the furious crowd, he at once retreated within doors and barred the entrance. On questioning Gritte, he ascertained that his guest, after walking about all night in great excitement, had gone out before daylight, and that he had not come in. Much alarmed, he went to his wife's room; the noise had just roused her, and he told her the horrible report which, true or false, had brought all Issoudun out to the Place Saint-Jean.

"Of course he is innocent!" said Madame Hochon.

"But before his innocence is proved, the mob may force their way in and rob us," said Monsieur Hochon, who had turned ashy pale. He had gold in his cellars.

"And Agathe?"

"She is sleeping like a marmot."

"Ah, so much the better!" said Madame Hochon; "I only wish she could sleep on till this matter is cleared up. Such a blow might kill the poor child."

But Agathe soon woke; she came down half-dressed, for Gritte's hints and concealments, when she questioned the woman, had sickened her heart and brain. She found Madame Hochon, pale and her eyes full of tears, standing at one of the drawing-room windows with her husband.

"Courage, my child! God sends us all our troubles," said the old lady. "Joseph is accused—"

"Of what?"

"Of a wicked deed he cannot possibly have done," said Madame Hochon.

On hearing this speech, and seeing the lieutenant of the watch come in with Messieurs Lousteau-Prangin and Mouilleron, Agathe fainted away.

"Look here," said Monsieur Hochon to his wife and Gritte, "just carry Madame Bridau away. Women are only a trouble under such circumstances. Go away, both of you, with her, and stay in your room.—Gentlemen, pray be seated," added the old man. "The mistake to which we owe this visit will, I hope, soon be cleared up."

"Even if it is a mistake," said Monsieur Mouilleron, "the mob are so madly exasperated, and excited to such a pitch, that I am alarmed for the accused.—I wish I could get him to the court house, and soothe the public mind."

"Who could have imagined that Monsieur Maxence Gilet was so much beloved?" said Lousteau-Prangin.

"There are twelve hundred people at this moment pouring out of the Roman suburb," said the lieutenant, "so one of my men has just told me—and shrieking for the assassin's death."

"Where is your guest?" asked Monsieur Mouilleron.

"He is gone for a walk in the country, I believe," said Hochon.

"Call back Gritte," said the examining judge gravely. "I hoped that Monsieur Bridau might not have left the house. You know, of course, that the crime was committed only a few yards from this house, just at daybreak?"

While Monsieur Hochon went to fetch Gritte, the three functionaries exchanged glances full of meaning.

"I never took to that painter's face," said the lieutenant to Monsieur Mouilleron.

"Listen to me," said the lawyer to Gritte, as she came in. "You saw Monsieur Joseph Bridau go out this morning, I am told?"

"Yes, sir," replied she, shaking like a leaf.

"At what hour?"

"Directly after I got up; for he was tramping in his room all night, and he was dressed when I came down."

"Was it daylight?"

"Twilight."

"And he seemed excited?"

"I should think he did!—He seemed to me quite how-come-you-so."

"Send one of your men for my clerk," said Lousteau-Prangin to the lieutenant, "and tell him to bring forms—"

"Good God! don't be in a hurry," said Monsieur Hochon. "The young man's excitement may be accounted for without any premeditated crime. He is starting for Paris to-day in consequence of a matter in which Gilet and Mademoiselle Flore Brazier chose to doubt his honesty."

"Yes, the business about the pictures," said Monsieur Mouilleron. "It was the cause of a vehement quarrel yesterday, and artists are always ready to catch fire under the thatch, as they say."

"Who in all Issoudun would have any interest in killing Max?" said Lousteau. "Nobody; no jealous husband, no one whatever, for the man has never injured any one."

"But what was Monsieur Gilet doing in the streets at half-past four in the morning?" said Monsieur Hochon.

"Look here, Monsieur Hochon, leave us to manage our own business," replied Mouilleron. "You do not know all. Max saw and knew your painter—"

At this instant a roar started from the bottom of the town, increasing as it rolled up the Grande Narette like the advance of a peal of thunder.

"Here he is!—here he is! They have got him!" These words stood out clearly above the deep bars of a terrific growl from the mob. In fact, poor Joseph Bridau, coming quietly home past the mill at Landrôle to be in time for breakfast, was seen as he reached the Place Misère by everybody at once. Happily for him, two men-at-arms came running down to rescue him from the mob of the Roman suburb, who had already seized him roughly by the arms, threatening to kill him.

"Make way! Clear out!" said the gendarmes, calling two others to come and walk one in front and one behind Bridau.

"You see, Monsieur," said one of the four who had taken hold of him, "our skin is in danger at this moment as much

as yours. Innocent or guilty, we must protect you against the riot caused by the murder of Captain Gilet; these people will not be satisfied with accusing you; they believe you to be the assassin as sure as death. Monsieur Gilet is worshipped by those men—look at them; they would love to execute justice on you themselves. We saw them in 1830, when they thrashed the excise men; it was no joke, I can tell you."

Joseph Bridau turned as pale as death, and collected all his strength to keep on his feet.

"After all," said he, "I had nothing to do with it. Come on!"

And he had to bear his cross! He was the object of yells, abuse, threats of death, at every step of the horrible walk from the Place Misère to the Place Saint-Jean. The gendarmes were obliged to draw their swords to intimidate the angry crowd who threw stones at them. The force barely escaped being hurt, and some of the missiles hit Joseph's legs, shoulders, and hat.

"Here we are," said one of the men, as they went into Monsieur Hochon's room; "and it was not an easy job, Lieutenant."

"Now, the next thing is to disperse this crowd, and I see but one way, gentlemen," said the officer to the magistrates. "It is to get Monsieur Bridau to the Palais de Justice by making him walk between you. I and all my men will keep close round you. It is impossible to answer for what may happen when you are face to face with six thousand furious creatures."

"You are right," said Monsieur Hochon, still quaking for his gold.

"If that is the best way you have at Issoudun of protecting innocence, I must congratulate you!" said Joseph. "I have already been within an ace of being stoned—"

"Do you want to see your host's house attacked and pillaged?" said the lieutenant. "Could we, with our swords, offer effectual resistance to a surge of men driven on by a

posse of angry people who know nothing of the forms of justice?"

"Oh! come on, gentlemen; we will talk it out afterward," said Joseph, who had recovered his presence of mind.

"Make way, my friends," said the lieutenant, "he is arrested; we are going to take him to the Palais de Justice."

"Respect the law, my good fellows!" said Monsieur Mouilleron.

"Would not you sooner see him guillotined?" said one of the gendarmes to a menacing group.

"Ay, ay!" cried an infuriated bystander. "Guillotine him!"

"He is to be guillotined!" repeated some women.

At the bottom of the Grande Narette they were saying:

"They are taking him off to be guillotined; the knife was found upon him! Oh! the wretch!—That is your Parisian!—Why, he has crime written on his face!"

Though Joseph's blood seethed in his head, he walked from the Place Saint-Jean to the Palais de Justice with admirable coolness and dignity. He was, nevertheless, glad enough when he found himself in Monsieur Lousteau-Prangin's office.

"I need hardly tell you, gentlemen, I suppose, that I am innocent," said he, addressing Monsieur Mouilleron, Monsieur Lousteau-Prangin, and the clerk. "I can only beg you to help me to prove my innocence. I know nothing about the matter—"

When the judge had explained to Joseph all the evidence against him, ending with Max's deposition, Joseph was astounded.

"Why," said he, "I did not leave the house till past five; I walked down the Grand' Rue, and at half-past five I was gazing at the front of your parish church of Saint-Cyr. I stopped to speak for a moment to the bell-ringer, who was about to toll the 'Angelus,' asking him some questions about the building, which had struck me as quaint and unfinished. Then I crossed the vegetable market, where the women were

already collecting. From thence I went by the Place Misère and the Pont-aux-Anes to the mill of Landrôle, where I quietly watched the ducks for five or six minutes; the miller's men must have noticed me. I saw some women coming to the washing-place; they must be there still; they began to laugh at me, remarking that I was no beauty; I replied that an ugly case might contain jewels. I went along the avenue as far as Tivoli, where I talked to the gardener. . . . Verify all these statements, and do not arrest me I beg, for I give you my word of honor to remain in your office till you are convinced of my innocence."

This rational statement, made without any hesitation, and with the ease of a man sure of his case, made some impression on the lawyers.

"Well, we must summons and find all these people," said Monsieur Mouilleron, "but that is not to be done in a day. Make up your mind, in your own interest, to remain in the lock-up of the Palais de Justice."

"Then let me write to reassure my mother, poor woman. —Oh, you may read the letter!"

The request was too reasonable to be refused, and Joseph wrote these few lines:

"Do not be uneasy, my dear mother; the mistake of which I am the victim will be easily cleared up, and I have given the clew. To-morrow, or perhaps this evening, I shall be free. I embrace you; and say to Monsieur and Madame Hochon how grieved I am by this worry, which is indeed no fault of mine, for it is the result of some mistake which I do not yet understand."

When this letter arrived, Madame Bridau was half dead of nervous terrors, and the remedies Monsieur Goddet was persuading her to sip had no effect whatever. But the reading of this letter was like a balm; after a few hysterical sobs Agathe sank into the quiescene that succeeds such a crisis.

When Monsieur Goddet came again to see his patient, he found her regretting having left Paris.

"God is punishing me," said she, with tears in her eyes. "Oh, my dear godmother, ought I not to have trusted in Him, and have looked to His mercy for my brother's fortune?"

"Madame," said Hochon in her ear, "if your son is innocent, Max is an utter villain, and we shall not overmatch him in the business; so go back to Paris."

"And how is Monsieur Gilet going on?" asked Madame Hochon of the doctor.

"The wound is serious, but not mortal. A month of care, and he will be all right again. I left him writing to Monsieur Mouilleron to request him to release your son," said he to Madame Bridau. "Oh! Max is a good fellow. I told him what a state you were in; and then he remembered a detail of the murderer's dress, which proved to him that he could not be your son; the assassin had on list shoes, and it is perfectly certain that your son went out walking in boots."

"Ah! God forgive him the ill he has done me!"

At nightfall a man had left a note for Gilet, written in a feigned hand, and in these words:

"Captain Gilet must not leave an innocent man in the hands of the law. The person who dealt the blow promises not to repeat it if Monsieur Gilet delivers Monsieur Joseph Bridau without denouncing the real culprit."

On reading this letter, which he burned, Max wrote to Monsieur Mouilleron a note mentioning the remark he had made to Monsieur Goddet, begging him to release Joseph, and to come and see him that he might explain matters.

By the time this note reached Monsieur Mouilleron, Lousteau-Prangin had already proved the truth of Joseph's account of himself, by the evidence of the bell-ringer, of a market-woman, of the washerwomen, the men of the mill, and the gardener from Frapesle. Max's letter finally demonstrated the innocence of the accused, whom Monsieur Mouilleron himself escorted back to Monsieur Hochon's. Joseph was received by his mother with such eager tenderness that, like the husband in La Fontaine's fable, this poor

misprized son was thankful to chance for an annoyance which had secured him such a demonstration of affection.

"Of course," said Monsieur Mouilleron, with an all-knowing air, "I saw at once, by the way you faced the mob, that you were innocent; but in spite of my convictions, you see, when you know what Issoudun is, the best way to protect you was to take you to prison as we did. I must say you put a good face on the matter."

"I was thinking of something else," replied the artist simply. "I know an officer who told me that he was once arrested in Dalmatia under somewhat similar circumstances, on his way home from an early morning walk, by an excited mob.—The similarity struck me, and I was studying all those heads with the idea of painting a riot in 1793. . . . And then I was saying to myself, 'Greedy wretch! you have got no more than you deserve for coming fortune-hunting instead of painting in your studio—' "

"If you will allow me to offer you a piece of advice," said the public prosecutor, "you will get into a post-chaise this evening at eleven o'clock—the postmaster will let you have one—and get back to Paris by diligence from Bourges."

"That is my opinion, too," said Monsieur Hochon, who was dying to be rid of his guest.

"And it is my most earnest wish to be out of Issoudun, though I leave my only friend here," replied Agathe, taking Madame Hochon's hand and kissing it. "When shall I see you again?"

"Ah! my child, we shall never meet again till we meet above! We have suffered so much here," she added, in an undertone, "that God will have pity on us."

A moment after, when Monsieur Mouilleron had been over to see Max, Gritte greatly astonished Monsieur and Madame Hochon, Agathe, Joseph, and Adolphine by announcing a call from Monsieur Rouget. Jean-Jacques had come to take leave of his sister, and to offer her the carriage to take her to Bourges.

"Ah, your pictures have done us an ill-turn," said Agathe.

"Keep them, sister," said the old man, who did not yet believe in the value of the paintings.

"Neighbor Rouget," said Monsieur Hochon, "our relations are our best friends and protectors, especially when they are such as your sister Agathe and your nephew Joseph."

"Perhaps so," said the old fellow, in bewilderment.

"You must be thinking of making a Christian end," said Madame Hochon.

"Oh, Jean-Jacques, what a day this has been!" said Agathe.

"Will you accept my carriage?" asked Rouget.

"No, brother," replied Madame Bridau. "Thank you, all the same. I wish you good health!"

Rouget allowed his sister and nephew to embrace him, then he went away after a cool leave-taking.

Baruch, at a word from his grandfather, had hurried off to the posting-house. At eleven that evening the two Parisians, packed into a wicker chaise with one horse ridden by a postilion, left Issoudun. Adolphine and Madame Hochon had tears in their eyes; they alone regretted Agathe and Joseph.

"They are gone!" cried François Hochon, going into Max's room with la Rabouilleuse.

"Well, the trick is done!" said Max, weakened by fever.

"But what did you say to old Mouilleron?" asked François.

"I told him that I had almost given my assassin just cause to wait for me at a street corner; that the man was quite capable, if the law were at his heels, of killing me like a dog before he could be caught. In consequence, I begged Mouilleron and Prangin to pretend to be hunting him down, but in fact to leave the man alone, unless they wanted to see me a dead man."

"I hope now, Max," said Flore, "that you will remain quiet at night for some little time."

"Well, we are quit of the Parisians at any rate," cried

Max. "The man who stabbed me did not imagine he was doing us such good service."

Next day, with the exception of a few very quiet and reserved people who shared the views of Monsieur and Madame Hochon, all the town rejoiced over the departure of the Bridaus, though it was due to a deplorable mistake, as if the event were a triumph of the provinces over Paris. Some of Max's friends expressed themselves in hard terms.

"Well, indeed! Did those Parisians imagine that we are all idiots, and that they had only to hold out a hat for fortunes to pour into it."

"They came in search of wool, and they have gone away shorn, for the nephew is not to his uncle's taste."

"And they had the advice of a Paris lawyer, if you please—"

"Oh, ho! They had laid a plan then?"

"Why, yes, a plan to get round Père Rouget; but the Parisians saw that they were not equal to it, and their lawyer won't laugh at the natives of le Berry—"

"But it is abominable, you know!"

"That is your Parisian!"

"La Rabouilleuse saw that she was attacked, and she defended herself—"

"And quite right too!"

To every one in the town Agathe and Joseph were "Parisians"—strangers—foreigners. They preferred Max and Flore.

With what satisfaction Agathe and Joseph found themselves at home in their little lodging in the Rue Mazarine may be imagined. In the course of the journey the artist had recovered his spirits, crushed for a time by the scene of his arrest, and by twenty hours in prison; but he could not rally his mother. Agathe could the less get over it, because the trial for military conspiracy before the Supreme Court was coming on.

Philippe's conduct, in spite of the skill of an advocate recommended by Desroches, gave rise to suspicions unfavor-

able to his reputation. So, as soon as Joseph had reported to Desroches all that had occurred at Issoudun, he started forthwith, accompanied by Mistigris, for the Comte de Sérizy's chateau, so as to hear nothing of this trial, which lasted twenty days.

It is useless here to enlarge on facts which are part of contemporary history. Whether it was that he played a part dictated to him, or that he turned King's evidence, Philippe's sentence was to police surveillance for five years; and he was required to set out, the very day he was released, for Autun, the town assigned to him as his place of residence during those five years. This sentence was a form of detention similar to that of prisoners on parole, who are confined within the walls of a town.

On hearing that the Comte de Sérizy, one of the peers appointed by the Upper Chamber to sit on the commission, was employing Joseph to decorate his house at Presles, Desroches craved an audience of this minister, and found him very well inclined to help Joseph, whose acquaintance he happened to have made. Desroches explained the pecuniary difficulties of the two brothers, mentioning the good service done by their father, and the way in which he had been forgotten under the Restoration.

"Such injustice as this, Monseigneur," said the attorney, "is a permanent source of irritation and discontent. You knew the father; then put it in the power of his sons to acquire a fortune."

He then briefly set forth the state of the family affairs at Issoudun, craving that the all-powerful vice-president of the Council would take some steps to persuade the Chief Commissioner of Police to transfer Philippe from Autun to Issoudun as a place of exile. Finally, he mentioned Philippe's abject poverty, and begged a pension of sixty francs a month, which the War Office might, in common decency, grant to a retired Lieutenant-Colonel.

"I will get all you ask done," said the Count, "for it all seems to me quite just."

Three days after, Desroches, armed with the necessary warrants, went to fetch Philippe from the prison cell of the Supreme Court, and took him to his own house in the Rue de Béthizy. There the young attorney gave the dreadful soldier one of those unanswerable sermons in which a lawyer places things in their true light, using the crudest language to epitomize the facts of his clients' conduct, to analyze their ideas, and reduce them to the simplest expression, when he takes enough interest in a man to preach to him. After crushing the Emperor's staff-officer by accusing him of reckless dissipation, and of causing his mother's misfortunes and the death of old Madame Descoings, he told him how matters stood at Issoudun, explaining them from his own point of view, and thoroughly unveiling the schemes and the character of Maxence Gilet and la Rabouilleuse. The political outlaw, who was gifted with keen perceptions in such matters, listened far more intently to this part of Desroches' lecture than to the first.

"This being the state of affairs," said the lawyer, "you may repair so much as is reparable of the mischief you have done to your excellent family—since you cannot restore to life the poor woman whose death lies at your door; but you alone can—"

"But how can I do it?" asked Philippe.

"I have interceded for you to be quartered at Issoudun instead of at Autun."

Philippe's face, grown very thin, and almost sinister, furrowed as it was by suffering and privation, was suddenly lighted up by a flash of satisfaction.

"You alone, I was saying, can rescue your uncle Rouget's fortune, of which, by this time, half, perhaps, has disappeared in the maw of that wolf called Gilet," Desroches went on. "You know all the facts; now you must act upon them. I suggest no scheme; I have no ideas on the subject. Besides, every plan might need modifying on the scene of action. You have a very strong adversary; the rascal is very astute, and the way in which he tried to get back the pict-

ures given to Joseph by your uncle, and succeeded in casting the odium of a crime on your poor brother, reveals an unscrupulous opponent. So be prudent; try to behave yourself in your own interest, if you cannot otherwise control yourself.—Without saying a word to Joseph, whose pride as an artist would rise in arms, I sent the pictures back to Monsieur Hochon, writing to him to deliver them only to you.—Maxence Gilet is brave . . ."

"So much the better," said Philippe; "I trust to the rascal's courage to enable me to succeed, for a coward would go away from Issoudun."

"Very good. Now, think of your mother, whose love for you is worthy of worship; and of your brother, whom you have used as your milch-cow . . ."

"What! he mentioned those trifles to you?" cried Philippe.

"Come, come; I am a friend of the family, and I know more about you than they do."

"What do you know?" asked Philippe.

"You turned traitor to your fellow-conspirators . . ."

"I!" cried Philippe; "I! a staff-officer of the Emperor's! Get along! We took in the Chamber of Peers, the lawyers, the Government, and the whole blessed boiling! The King's men saw nothing but the blaze . . ."

"So much the better if it is true," replied the lawyer. "But, you see, the Bourbons cannot be overthrown; they have Europe on their side; and you should try to make your peace with the War Office—Oh! you will when you are a rich man. To grow rich, you and your brother must get hold of your uncle. If you want to bring a matter requiring so much skill, judgment, and patience to a good end, you have enough to keep your hands full all your five years—"

"No, no," interrupted Philippe, "the thing must be done quickly. That Gilet may get possession of my uncle's money and invest it in that woman's name, then all would be lost."

"Well, Monsieur Hochon is a shrewd, clear-sighted man. Take his advice. You have your pass for the journey, your place is taken by the Orleans diligence for half-past seven, your trunk is packed.—Come to dinner."

"I have not a thing but what I stand up in," said Philippe, opening his wretched blue great-coat. "But I want three things, which I would ask you to beg my friend Giroudeau, Finot's uncle, to send after me—my cavalry sword, my rapier, and my pistols."

"You want a good deal besides," said the lawyer with a shudder, as he looked at his client. "You shall have three months' advanced pay to get you decent clothing."

"Hallo! are you here, Godeschal?" cried Philippe, recognizing Mariette's brother in Desroches' head-clerk.

"Yes; I have been with Monsieur Desroches these two months."

"And he will stay here, I hope," said Desroches, "till he buys a practice."

"And Mariette?" asked Philippe, touched by the thought of her.

"She is waiting for the new house to be opened."

"It would not cost her much to see me once more," said Philippe. "However, as she pleases!"

After the scanty dinner, paid for by Desroches, who was giving his head-clerk his board, the two young lawyers saw the political outlaw into the coach, and wished him good luck.

On the 2d of November, All Souls' Day, Philippe Bridau presented himself before the head of the police at Issoudun to have his pass countersigned on the day of his arrival; then, by that functionary's instructions, he found a lodging in the Rue de l'Avenier.

The news immediately spread through Issoudun that one of the officers involved in the late conspiracy was quartered in the town, and the sensation was all the greater because it was understood that this officer was the brother of the painter

who had been so unjustly arrested. Maxence Gilet, by this time quite recovered from his wound, had carried through the difficult business of calling in the moneys placed on mortgage by Père Rouget, and having them invested in the funds. The loan of a hundred and forty thousand francs, raised by the old man on his land, had produced a great sensation, for in the country everything is known. On behalf of the Bridaus, Monsieur Hochon, shocked at this necessity, questioned old Monsieur Héron, Rouget's notary, as to the object of this change of investments.

"If Père Rouget changes his mind, his heirs will owe me a votive offering," cried Monsieur Héron. "But for me, the old man would have invested the capital of fifty thousand francs a year in the name of Maxence Gilet. But I told Mademoiselle Brazier that she had better be satisfied with the will, or risk an action for undue influence, seeing the abundant proof of their manœuvring afforded by the transfers made in every direction. To gain time I advised Maxence and his mistress to let people forget this sudden change in the old boy's habits."

"Ah! constitute yourself the ally and protector of the Bridaus, for they are penniless," said Monsieur Hochon, who could not forgive Max for the terrors he had endured when fearing that his house would be pillaged.

Maxence Gilet and Flore Brazier, untouched by all misgiving, made light of the advent of old Rouget's elder nephew. The moment Philippe should cause them any anxiety, they knew they could transfer the securities to either of themselves by making Rouget sign a power of attorney. If he should alter his will, fifty thousand francs a year was a very handsome plum of consolation, especially after burdening the real estate with a mortgage of a hundred and forty thousand francs.

The morning after his arrival Philippe called on his uncle at about ten o'clock; he was bent on exhibiting himself in his dreadful old clothes. And, indeed, when the discharged patient from the hospital, the prisoner from the Luxembourg,

entered the sitting-room, Flore Brazier felt her heart chill at his repulsive appearance. Gilet, too, felt that shock to the mind and feelings by which Nature warns us of some latent hostility or looming danger. While Philippe had acquired an indescribably sinister expression of countenance from his late misfortunes, his dress certainly added to the effect. The wretched blue overcoat was buttoned in military style up to his chin, for melancholy reasons indeed, but it showed too plainly what it was meant to hide. The edge of his trousers, fringed like a pensioner's coat, revealed abject squalor. His boots left damp blots of muddy water oozing from the gaping seams. The gray hat the Colonel held showed a hideously greasy lining. His walking-stick, a cane that had lost its varnish, had stood, no doubt, in all the corners of the cafés of Paris, and its battered ferrule must have dipped in many a mud-heap. From a stiff velvet collar that showed the paper lining rose a head exactly like Frédérick Lemaître when made up for the last act of "la Vie d'un Joueur"; the breakdown of a still powerful man was visible in a coppery complexion that looked green in patches. Such complexions are to be seen in the faces of debauchees who have spent many nights at play; their eyes are surrounded by a dark, sooty ring, the eyelids vinous rather than red, the brow ominous from all the ruin it betrays. Philippe's cheeks were furrowed and hollow, for he had scarcely recovered from his hospital treatment. His head was bald, a few locks left at the back ended by his ears. The pure blue of his glittering eyes had assumed a cold, steely hue.

"Good-morning, uncle," said he in a husky voice; "I am your nephew, Philippe Bridau. This is how the Bourbons treat a lieutenant-colonel, a veteran of the old army, a man who carried the Emperor's orders at the battle of Montereau. I should be ashamed if my greatcoat were to fall open, on Mademoiselle's account. After all, it is the rule of the game! We chose to begin it again, and we were beaten.—I am residing in your town by orders of the po-

lice, on full pay and allowances of sixty francs a month. So the good people of Issoudun need not fear that I shall raise the price of victuals.—I see you are in good and fair company."

"Oh! so you are my nephew . . ." said Jean-Jacques.

"But pray ask the Colonel to stay to breakfast," said Flore.

"No, Madame, thank you," replied Philippe; "I have breakfasted. Besides, I would sooner cut my hand off than ask my uncle for a bit of bread or a single centime after what happened in this town to my brother and my mother. At the same time, I did not think it seemly that I should live in Issoudun without paying my respects to him now and then. But for the rest, you can do as you please," said he, holding out his hand, in which Rouget placed his for Philippe to shake, "just as you please; I shall take no exception so long as the honor of the Bridaus is untouched."

Gilet could watch the Lieutenant-Colonel at his leisure, for Philippe avoided looking in his direction in a very pointed way. Though the blood boiled in his veins, it was very important to Max that he should behave with that prudence of great diplomats which so often resembles cowardice, and not flare out like a young man; he sat calm and cold.

"It would not be seemly," said Flore, "that you should live on sixty francs a month under the very nose of your uncle with forty thousand francs a year, and who has behaved so handsome to Monsieur Gilet, the Captain here, his natural half-brother—"

"To be sure, Philippe," said the old fellow, "we must see about it."

At the introduction thus effected by Flore, Philippe bowed almost timidly to Gilet, who bowed too.

"Uncle, I have some pictures here to return to you. They are at Monsieur Hochon's. You will, I hope, do me the pleasure of coming to identify them some day or other."

Having spoken these words in a dry tone, Lieutenant-Colonel Philippe Bridau went away.

His visit made a deeper impression on Flore's mind, and on Gilet's too, than mere dismay at the first sight of this dreadful old campaigner. As soon as Philippe had slammed the door with the violence of a supplanted heir, Flore and Gilet hid behind the curtains to watch him as he crossed over from his uncle's house to the Hochons'.

"What a blackguard!" said Flore, with a questioning glance at Gilet.

"Yes, unfortunately there were some men like that in the Emperor's armies; I settled seven of them on the hulks," said Gilet.

"I hope that you will pick no quarrel with this one," said Mademoiselle Brazier.

"That one!" retorted Max. "He is a mangy dog—but he would like a bone," he added, addressing old Rouget. "If his uncle will trust my opinion, he will get rid of him with a present; he will not leave you in peace, Papa Rouget."

"He smelled of horrible tobacco," said the old man.

"He smelled your money too," said Flore in a peremptory tone. "My opinion is that you should decline to receive him."

"I am sure I am quite willing," said the old man.

"Monsieur," said Gritte, going into the room where the Hochon family were sitting after breakfast, "here is that Monsieur Bridau you spoke about."

Philippe entered with much politeness, in the midst of perfect silence, produced by general curiosity. Madame Hochon shuddered from head to foot on beholding the author of all Agathe's woes, and the cause of good old Madame Descoings' death. Adolphine, too, was unpleasantly startled; Baruch and François looked at each other with surprise. Old Hochon preserved his presence of mind, and offered Madame Bridau's son a seat.

"I have come," said Philippe, "to recommend myself to

your good graces, for I have to arrange matters so as to live in this town for five years on sixty francs a month allowed me by France."

"It can be done," said Monsieur Hochon.

Philippe talked on indifferent subjects, and conducted himself perfectly well. He spoke of Lousteau the journalist, the old lady's nephew, as a perfect eagle, and her favor was completely won when she heard him declare that the name of Lousteau would be famous. Then he did not hesitate to confess the errors of his ways; in reply to a friendly reproof administered by Madame Hochon in an undertone, he said that he had thought much while in prison, and promised her to be quite another man for the future.

In response to a word from Philippe, Monsieur Hochon went out with him. When the miser and the soldier were on the Boulevard Baron, at a spot where no one could overhear them, the Colonel said:

"Monsieur, if you will take my word for it, we had better never discuss business or certain persons excepting when walking out in the country, or in places where we can talk without being heard. Maître Desroches impressed upon me how great is the power of gossip in a small town. I do not wish that you should be suspected of helping me by your advice, though Desroches enjoined on me that I should ask it, and I beg you to give it me freely. We have a powerful enemy opposed to us; we must neglect no precaution that may enable us to defeat him. To begin with, excuse me if I call no more. A little distance between us will leave you clear of any suspicion of influencing my conduct. When I require to consult you, I will walk past your house at half-past nine, just as you are finishing breakfast. If you see me carrying my stick as we shoulder arms, that will convey to you that we are to meet by chance at some spot where we may walk, and which you will tell me of."

"All that seems to me the idea of a prudent man who means to succeed," said the old man.

"And I shall succeed, Monsieur. To begin with, can

you tell me of any officers of the old army living here who are not allies of that Maxence Gilet, and with whom I may make acquaintance."

"There is a Captain of the Artillery of the Guard, a Monsieur Mignonnet, who was cadet from the Ecole Polytechnique, a man of about forty, who lives quietly; he is a man of honor, and denounces Max, whose conduct seems to him unworthy of a soldier."

"Good!" said Philippe.

"There are not many officers of that stamp," Monsieur Hochon went on. "I can think of no one else but a cavalry captain."

"That was my corps," said Philippe. "Was he in the Guards?"

"Yes," said Monsieur Hochon. "In 1810 Carpentier was Quartermaster-General of the Dragoons; he left that regiment and entered the Line as second lieutenant, where he rose to be captain."

"Giroudeau perhaps may know him," thought Philippe.

"Monsieur Carpentier took the place at the Mairie which Maxence threw up, and he is a friend of Major Mignonnet's."

"And what can I do here for my living?"

"I believe that an Insurance Company is about to be started for the Department of the Cher; you might find employment there, but it would not be more than fifty francs a month at the best."

"That will do for me."

By the end of the week Philippe had a new coat, waistcoat, and trousers of blue Elbeuf cloth, bought on credit for monthly payments; boots too, leather gloves, and a hat. Giroudeau sent him some linen from Paris, his weapons, and a letter of introduction to Carpentier, who had served under the former Captain of Dragoons. This letter secured to Philippe Carpentier's good offices, and he introduced him to Mignonnet as a man of the highest merit and noblest character. Philippe soon won the admiration of these two worthy officers by confiding to them some details of the conspiracy

for which he had been tried; it had been, as every one knows, the last attempt of the old army to rebel against the Bourbons; for the case of the Sergeants of la Rochelle falls under another category.

After 1822 the soldiery, who had learned a lesson from the fate of the conspiracy of August the 19th, 1820, and of Berton's and Caron's plots, made up their mind to await the turn of events. This last scheme, the younger sister of that of the 19th of August, was identically the same, but recomposed of better elements. Like the first, it was kept absolutely secret from the King's Government. The conspirators, once more found out, were clever enough to reduce a really far-reaching enterprise to the semblance of a mere petty barrack mutiny. The north of France was to be the scene of this conspiracy, in which several regiments of cavalry, artillery, and infantry were implicated. The frontier fortresses were to be all seized at once by surprise. In the event of success, the treaties of 1815 were to be nullified by the immediate federation of Belgium, which was to be torn from the Holy Alliance as the outcome of a military compact among soldiers. Two thrones were at once to founder in this swift whirlwind.

Of this formidable scheme planned by clever heads, with which some Great Personages were mixed up, nothing came but a case for the Supreme Court. Philippe Bridau consented to screen his betters, who vanished at the moment when their plans were discovered—either by some treachery or by chance; and they, in their seats in the Chambers, had only promised their co-operation to crown success at the very heart of Government.

To relate the scheme which the confessions of the Liberals, in 1830, divulged in all its depth, and in its immense ramifications, unknown to the initiated of the baser class, would be to intrude on the domain of history, and would lead to too long a digression. This outline will suffice to explain the twofold part played by Philippe. The Emperor's staff-officer was to have led an outbreak in Paris, intended merely

to mask the real conspiracy and to keep the Government busy at its centre, while the great movement took place in the north. Afterward he was put forward to break the connection between the two plots by betraying only some unimportant secrets; his destitute appearance and broken health were admirably calculated to throw discredit and contempt on the enterprise in the eyes of the authorities. This part was well suited to the precarious position of this unprincipled gambler. Feeling that he had one foot in each party, the wily Philippe played the good apostle to the King's Government, and yet did not lose the esteem of men standing high in his own party; but he promised himself that at a future day he would follow up the line that might offer the greater advantages.

These revelations as to the vast extent of the real conspiracy made Philippe a man of the highest importance in the eyes of Carpentier and Mignonnet, for his devotedness showed a political sense worthy of the best days of the Convention. Thus, in a few days, the cunning Bonapartist became the friend of these two men, whose respectability cast its reflection on him. By the recommendation of Monsieur Carpentier and Monsieur Mignonnet he at once got the appointment mentioned by Hochon in the Mutual Insurance Society of the Department of the Cher. His work was to keep the books, as in a tax-collector's office, to fill in printed circulars with names and numbers, and send them off, and to issue policies of insurance; thus he was not employed for more than three hours daily.

Mignonnet and Carpentier secured the admission of this visitor to Issoudun to their club, where his air and manners, quite in accordance with the high opinion these two officers had formed of this leader of conspiracies, gained him the respect which is paid to often deceptive appearances. Philippe, whose conduct was the result of much deliberation, had meditated in prison on the disadvantages of a dissolute life. He had not needed Desroches' lecture to perceive the necessity for conciliating the good opinion of the townspeople by honest, decent, and cleanly conduct. Delighted to cast reflec-

tions on Max by living as respectably as Mignonnet, he also wished to lull Max by deceiving him as to his character. He meant to be looked upon as a nincompoop, by affecting disinterested generosity while circumventing the enemy and aiming at his uncle's fortune; whereas his mother and his brother, who were really disinterested, generous, and magnanimous, had been accused of cunning while acting with artless simplicity.

Philippe's greed had been fired in proportion to his uncle's wealth, which Monsieur Hochon expatiated on in detail. In the first private conversation he had held with this old man they had fully agreed that, above all things, Philippe must not rouse Max's suspicions; for all would be lost if Max and Flore carried off their victim, even to Bourges.

Once a week Colonel Bridau dined with Captain Mignonnet, another day with Carpentier, and every Thursday with Monsieur Hochon. He was soon invited to other houses, and by the end of three weeks had only his breakfast to pay for. He never mentioned his uncle, nor la Rabouilleuse, nor Gilet, unless it were to make some inquiry with reference to his mother's or Joseph's stay in the town. Finally, the three officers, the only men wearing the ribbon of the Legion of Honor—Philippe having the superior decoration of the Rosette, which gave him a marked superiority in everybody's eyes, very noticeable in a country town—would take their daily walk together at the same hour before dinner, keeping themselves to themselves, to use a homely phrase.

This attitude, this reserve and calm demeanor, produced an excellent effect in Issoudun. Max's adherents all looked upon Philippe as a *sabreur*, a swashbuckler, an expression used by soldiers to attribute the coarsest kind of courage to a superior officer, while denying him the capacity for command.

"He is a very respectable man," said the elder Goddet to Max.

"Pooh!" replied Captain Gilet, "his behavior before the Court shows him to be either a dupe or a spy; he is, as you

say, fool enough to have been the dupe of those who were playing for high stakes."

After getting his appointment, Philippe, aware of the gossip of the place, was anxious to conceal certain facts as far as possible from his neighbors' knowledge; he therefore took rooms in a house at the end of the Faubourg Saint-Paterne, with a very large garden attached. There, in perfect secrecy, he could practice sword-play with Carpentier, who had been instructor in a regiment of foot before his promotion to the Imperial Guard. After having thus recovered his old superiority, Philippe learned from Carpentier certain secret tricks which would enable him to meet the most accomplished opponent without any fear. He next took to pistol practice with Mignonnet and Carpentier, for amusement, as he said, but in reality to lead Maxence to believe that, in the event of a duel, he relied on that weapon. Whenever Philippe met Gilet he expected him to salute, and replied by lifting the front of his hat with his finger in a cavalier fashion, as a colonel does to a private.

Maxence Gilet never gave any sign of annoyance or dissatisfaction; he never uttered a single word on the subject at la Cognette's, where he still had little suppers, though since Fario's knife-thrust the nocturnal pranks were for a time pretermitted. Still, at the end of a certain time, Lieutenant-Colonel Bridau's contempt for Major Gilet was a patent fact, and discussed by some of the Knights of Idlesse who were less closely attached to Maxence than were Baruch, François, and two or three more. It was a matter of general surprise to see Max the vehement and fiery behaving so meekly. No one at Issoudun, not even Potel or Renard, ventured to mention so delicate a matter to Gilet. Potel, really disturbed by such a public misunderstanding between two officers of the old guard, represented Max as quite capable of hatching some plot in which the Colonel might get the worst of it. By Potel's account some new pitfall might be expected, after what Max had done to be rid of the mother and brother—for the Fario affair was no longer a mystery.

Monsieur Hochon had not failed to expose Gilet's atrocious game to all the wise heads of the town. Monsieur Mouilleron, too, the hero of a piece of town gossip, had confidentially revealed the name of Gilet's would-be murderer, if only to find out the causes of Fario's hatred of Max, so as to keep justice on the alert in case of further events. Thus, while discussing the Colonel's attitude toward Max, and endeavoring to guess what might come of this antagonism, the town regarded them by anticipation as adversaries.

Philippe, who was anxiously investigating the details of his brother's arrest, and the antecedent history of Gilet and la Rabouilleuse, ended by forming a somewhat intimate alliance with Fario, who was his neighbor. After carefully studying the Spaniard, Philippe thought he might trust a man of his temper. Their hatred was so absolutely in unison that Fario placed himself at Philippe's service, and told him all he knew of the feats of the Knights of Idlesse. Philippe, on his part, promised that, if he should succeed in obtaining such influence over his uncle as Gilet now exerted, he would indemnify Fario for all his losses, and thus secured his fidelity. Maxence had therefore a formidable enemy to meet—some one who could talk to him, as they say in those parts. The town of Issoudun, excited by rumor, foresaw a struggle between these two men who, be it observed, held each other in utter contempt.

One morning, toward the end of November, Philippe, meeting Monsieur Hochon at noon in the Avenue de Frapesle, said to him:

"I have discovered that your grandsons Baruch and François are the intimate allies of Maxence Gilet. The young rogues take part at night in all the pranks played in the town. And so, through them, Maxence knew everything that went on in your house when my brother and mother were staying with you."

"And what proof have you of anything so shocking?"

"I heard them talking at night as they came out of a tav-

ern. Your two grandsons each owe Maxence a thousand crowns. The villain desired the poor boys to find out what our plans are. He reminded them that it was you who proposed to besiege my uncle through the priesthood, and said that no one could advise me but you—for, happily, he regards me as a mere fighting-cock."

"What! My grandchildren . . ."

"Watch them," said Philippe; "you will see them coming home to the Place Saint-Jean at two or three in the morning, as sodden as champagne-corks, and walking with Maxence."

"So that is why the rascals are so abstemious!" said Monsieur Hochon.

"Fario told me something of their nocturnal habits," said Philippe. "But for him I should never have guessed it.—My uncle is evidently oppressed by the most horrible tyranny, to judge from the few words my Spaniard overheard Max saying to your boys. I suspect that Max and la Rabouilleuse have a plan for grabbing the State securities for fifty thousand francs a year and going off to be married I don't know where, after plucking that wing from the pigeon. It is high time to find out what is going on in my uncle's house; but I do not know how to set about it."

"I will think it over," said the old man.

Philippe and Monsieur Hochon then went opposite ways, seeing other people approaching.

Never, at any period of his life, had Jean-Jacques Rouget been so miserable as since his nephew Philippe's first visit. Flore, in great terror, had a presentiment of some danger hanging over Max. Tired of her master, and fearing that he would live to a great age, as her criminal practices had so little effect on him, she hit on the very simple plan of leaving the place and going to Paris to be married to Maxence, after extracting from Rouget the bonds bearing fifty thousand francs a year. The old fellow, warned not indeed by any care for his heirs, nor by personal avarice, but by his passion for Flore, refused to give her the securities, pointing out

that he had left her everything. The unhappy man knew how devotedly she loved Maxence, and he foresaw that she would desert him as soon as she should be rich enough to marry. When, after lavishing her tenderest coaxing, Flore found her request denied, she tried severity: she never spoke to her master, she sent Védie to wait upon him, and the woman one morning found the old man with his eyes red from having wept all night. For a week Père Rouget had his breakfast alone, and heaven knows how!

So, the day after his conversation with Monsieur Hochon, when Philippe paid his uncle a second visit, he found him much altered. Flore remained in the room near the old man, on whom she shed tender glances, speaking kindly to him, and playing the farce so well that Philippe understood the dangers of the situation merely from the solicitude paraded for his benefit. Gilet, whose policy it was to avoid any collision with Philippe, did not appear. After studying Père Rouget and Flore with a keen eye, the Colonel decided on a bold stroke.

"Good-by, my dear uncle," he said, rising, so as to seem about to leave.

"Oh, do not go yet," cried the old man, who was basking in Flore's pretended affection. "Dine with us, Philippe."

"I will, if you will first take an hour's walk with me."

"Monsieur is very ailing," said Mademoiselle Brazier. "He would not go out driving just now," she added, turning to the old man, and looking at him with the fixed gaze that sometimes quells a madman.

Philippe took Flore by the arm, made her look at him, and gazed at her just as fixedly as she had stared at her victim.

"Tell me, Mademoiselle," said he, "am I to infer that my uncle is not free to come for a walk alone with me."

"Of course he is, Monsieur," said Flore, who could hardly make any other reply.

"Well, then, come, uncle. Now, Mademoiselle, give him his hat and stick."

"But, as a rule, he never goes out without me. Do you, Monsieur?"

"Yes, Philippe, yes; I always want her—"

"We had better go in the carriage," said Flore.

"Yes, let us go in the carriage," cried the old man in his anxiety to reconcile his two tyrants.

"Uncle, you will come for a walk, and with me, or I come here no more. For the town will be in the right: you are under Mademoiselle Flore Brazier's thumb.—My uncle loves you, well and good," he went on, fixing a leaden eye on Flore. "You do not love him—that too is quite in order. But that you should make the old man miserable? There we draw the line. Those who want to inherit a fortune must earn it.—Now, uncle, are you coming?"

Philippe saw an agony of hesitancy depicted on the face of the poor helpless creature, whose eyes wandered first to Flore and then to his nephew.

"So that is how it stands!" said the Colonel. "Very good! Good-by, uncle. As for you, Mademoiselle—your servant!"

He turned round quickly as he reached the door, and again detected a threatening gesture from Flore to his uncle.

"Uncle," said he, "if you will come for a walk with me, I will meet you at your door. I am going to Monsieur Hochon for ten minutes. . . . If you and I do not get our walk, I will back myself to send some people walking I could name."

And Philippe crossed the avenue to call on the Hochons.

Any one can imagine the scene in the family which resulted from Philippe's revelation to Monsieur Hochon. At nine o'clock that morning old Monsieur Héron had made his appearance with a bundle of papers, and found a fire in the large room, lighted by the master's orders, quite against the general rule. Madame Hochon, dressed at this unconscionable hour, was sitting in her armchair by the fire. The two grandsons, warned by Adolphine of a storm gathering over

their heads since yesterday, had been ordered to stay at home. Having been summoned by Gritte, they were chilled by the paraphernalia of ceremony displayed by their grandparents, whose cold wrath had hung over them for the past twenty-four hours.

"Do not rise for them," said the old man to Monsieur Héron. "You see before you two wretches unworthy of forgiveness."

"Oh! grandpapa!" said François.

"Silence," said the solemn old man. "I know all about your life at night and your intimacy with Monsieur Maxence Gilet; but you will not meet him again at la Cognette's at one in the morning, for you are not to go out of this house again till you set out for your respective destinations.—So you ruined Fario? You have many a time been within an ace of finding yourselves in a criminal court?—Be silent!" he exclaimed, seeing Baruch open his mouth. "You both owe money to Monsieur Maxence, who for six years past has been supplying you with it for your debaucheries.—Listen, now, to the accounts of my guardianship; we will talk afterward. You will see from these documents whether you can play tricks with me, play tricks on the family and the laws of family honor by betraying the secrets of the house, and repeating to Monsieur Maxence Gilet what is said and done in it! For a thousand crowns you play the spy! For ten thousand you would no doubt commit murder? Indeed, did you not almost kill Madame Bridau? for Monsieur Gilet knew full well that it was Fario who had stabbed him when he accused my guest Monsieur Joseph Bridau of the attempt. And when that gallows-bird committed such a crime, it was because he had learned from you that Madame Agathe intended to remain here.—You, my grandsons, to play the spy for such a man! You, street-bullies! Did you not know that your worthy chief already, in 1806, had caused the death of a poor young creature? I will have no assassins or robbers in my house. You will just pack up your things and go elsewhere to be hanged!"

The two young men were as white and rigid as plaster images.

"Begin, Monsieur Héron," said the miser to the notary.

The old lawyer read out an account of Hochon's guardianship, whence it appeared that the entire unincumbered fortune of the two Borniche children amounted to seventy thousand francs, the money settled on their mother; but Monsieur Hochon had loaned his daughter considerable sums, and, as representing the lenders, had a lien on part of his grandchildren's fortune. The share remaining to Baruch came to twenty thousand francs.

"There, you are a rich man," said his grandfather. "Take your money and walk alone! I remain free to bestow my wealth and Madame Hochon's—for she agrees with me on every point in this matter—on whomsoever I please, on our dear Adolphine. Yes, she shall marry a peer's son if we choose, for she will have all we possess!"

"And a very fine fortune it is," added Monsieur Héron.

"Monsieur Maxence Gilet will indemnify you!" said Madame Hochon.

"I see myself scraping twenty-sous pieces together for such a couple of ne'er-do-weels!" exclaimed Monsieur Hochon.

"Forgive me," stammered Baruch.

"*Forgive me this once, and never no more,*" repeated the old man, mocking the voice of a child. "Yes, and if I forgive you, off you go to Monsieur Maxence to tell him what has befallen you and put him on his guard. . . . No, no, my little gentlemen. I shall have means of knowing how you conduct yourselves. As you behave, I shall behave. It is not by the good conduct of a day or of a month that I shall judge you, but by that of many years. I am strong on my feet, hale and hearty. I hope to live long enough yet to see which way you go.—You, the capitalist," he added to Baruch, "will go to Paris to study banking with Monsieur Mongenod. Woe to you there if you do not walk straight; they will keep an eye on you. Your money is in the hands of Mongenod & Sons; here is a check on them for the whole

sum. So now release me by signing your account, which is closed by a receipt in full," said he, taking the paper out of Héron's hands and giving it to Baruch.

"As for you, Francois Hochon, you owe me money instead of having any to receive," said the old man, addressing his other grandson. "Monsieur Héron, will you read him his statement; it is clear—quite clear."

The reading took place in utter silence.

"I am sending you to Poitiers, with six hundred francs a year, to study law," said his grandfather, when the notary ended. "I was prepared to make life easy for you; now you must become an advocate to make your living. Ah, ha! my young rascals, for six years you have taken me in! Well, it took me just an hour in my turn to overtake you. I have seven-league boots!"

Just as old Monsieur Héron was leaving, carrying with him the signed releases, Gritte announced Monsieur le Colonel Philippe Bridau. Madame Hochon left the room, taking her grandsons with her "to the confessional," as old Hochon expressed it, and to ascertain what effect this scene had had on them.

Philippe and the old man went to the window and talked in low tones.

"I have been considering the position of your affairs," said Monsieur Hochon, looking across to the house opposite. "I have just been talking them over with Monsieur Héron. The bond bearing fifty thousand francs interest can only be sold by the holder himself, or by his order. Now, since you came, your uncle has signed no such order in any lawyer's office; and as he has not been out of Issoudun, he has signed none elsewhere. If he gave any one a power of attorney in this place, we should know of it at once; if he did it elsewhere, we should hear of it all the same, for it would have to be stamped, and our good Monsieur Héron has means of information. So if the old man should go out of the town, follow him, find out where he has been, and we will take steps to discover what he has done."

"The power has not been given," said Philippe. "They are trying for it, but I hope to prevent its being executed. No, it will *not* be executed!" cried Philippe, seeing his uncle appear on his doorstep. He pointed him out to Monsieur Hochon, and hastily told him of the events—so trivial and so important—of his visit to Rouget. "Maxence is afraid of me," he added, "but he cannot keep out of my way. Mignonnet tells me that all the officers of the old army keep high festival at Issoudun every year on the anniversary of the Emperor's coronation. Well, then, two days hence Max and I must meet."

"If he can get the power of attorney by the morning of the 1st of December, he will be off to Paris by the mail, and leave the anniversay to take care of itself."

"True; then I must get hold of my uncle; but I have an eye that settles idiots," said Philippe, making Monsieur Hochon quail under a villanous glare.

"If they are allowing him to walk out with you, Maxence has no doubt hit on some other plan for winning the game," said the old miser.

"Oh! Fario is on the watch," replied Philippe, "and not only he. The Spaniard discovered for me, in the neighborhood of Vatan, one of my old soldiers to whom I once did a service. No one suspects that Benjamin Bourdet is at the Spaniard's orders, and Fario has placed one of his horses at Benjamin's service."

"If you were to kill the monster who perverted my grandsons, you would be really doing a good action."

"By this time, thanks to me, all Issoudun knows what Monsieur Maxence has been at by night for these six years past," replied Philippe, "and tongues are wagging about him pretty freely. Morally he is a ruined man."

The moment Philippe had left his uncle, Flore went to Max's room to relate to him the smallest details of the visit paid by this audacious nephew.

"What is to be done?" said she.

"Before having recourse to extreme measures, which

would be a duel with that long corpse of a man," replied Maxence, "we must play for double or quits by a daring stroke. Let the old simpleton go out with his nephew."

"But that great hound does not beat about the bush," cried Flore; "he will call a spade a spade."

"Just attend to me," said Maxence, in his most strident tones. "Do you suppose that I have not listened at doors and considered our position? Send to old Cognet for a conveyance and a horse, now, this minute! All must be done in five minutes. Put all that is yours into the cart, take Védie, and be off to Vatan; take the twenty thousand francs he has in his desk. If I bring the old boy to Vatan, do not consent to return here till he has signed the power of attorney. Then I will sneak off to Paris while you come back to Issoudun.—When Jean-Jacques comes in from his walk and finds that you are gone, he will lose his head and want to run after you. Very good—and I will talk to him then!"

While this plot was being laid, Philippe, arm in arm with his uncle, had taken him for a walk on the Boulevard Baron.

"There are two great schemers at loggerheads," said old Hochon to himself, watching the Colonel supporting his uncle. "I am curious to see the end of this game, where the stake is ninety thousand francs a year."

"My dear uncle," said Philippe, whose phraseology had some flavor of his Paris associates, "you are in love with that minx, and you show devilish good taste, for she is a stunning armful. Instead of cossetting you, she makes you trot round like her footman—and that again is natural enough; she would like to see you six feet under the daisies to marry Maxence, whom she worships—"

"Yes, Philippe, I know all that, but I love her all the same."

"Well, I have sworn by my mother's body—and she is your sister, sure enough," Philippe went on—"to make your Rabouilleuse as pliant as my glove, and just what she must have been before that blackguard, who is un-

worthy ever to have served in the Imperial Guard, came sponging on your household—"

"Oh! if you could only do that!" said the old man.

"It is easy enough," replied Philippe, cutting him short. "I will kill Maxence like a dog—but—on one condition."

"What is that?" asked old Rouget, looking at his nephew with a blank expression.

"Do not sign the power of attorney they are asking for before the 3d of December; drag on only till then. Those two vultures want your license to sell out your stock for fifty thousand francs a year, solely to go and get married in Paris, and there have a high time with your million."

"I am very much afraid of it," said Rouget.

"Well, then, whatever they may do to you, put off signing it till next week."

"Yes, but when Flore talks to me she upsets me so that it turns my brain. I tell you, she has a way of looking at me that makes her blue eyes seem like Paradise, and I am no longer my own master, particularly as there are days when she leaves me in disgrace."

"Well, if she is all honey, just be satisfied to promise her the document, and give me notice the day before you sign it. Maxence will never be your representative—unless he has killed me. If I kill him, you may take me to live with you in his place, and I will make your beauty dance at a word or a look. Yes, Flore shall be fond of you, or, by God, if she vexes you, I will give her a hiding."

"Oh! that I would never allow. A blow to Flore would fall on my heart."

"And yet it is the only way to train a woman or a horse. A man who makes himself feared is loved and obeyed. This is all I wanted to say in your private ear.—Good morning, gentlemen," said he to Mignonnet and Carpentier. "I am taking my uncle for a little walk you see, and trying to teach him; for we live in an age when the young people are obliged to educate their grandparents."

Greetings were exchanged.

"You behold in my dear uncle the results of an unfortunate passion," the Colonel went on. "He is about to be despoiled of his fortune and left stripped like Baba—you know to whom I allude. The good man knows of the plot, but he cannot make up his mind to do without his Nanna for a few days to baffle her," and Philippe frankly explained the position in which his uncle stood.

"You see, gentlemen," said he in conclusion, "that there are not two ways of setting my uncle free. Colonel Bridau must kill Major Gilet, or Major Gilet must kill Colonel Bridau. The day after to-morrow is the anniversary of the Emperor's coronation; I count on you so to arrange the seats at the banquet that I may be opposite to Major Gilet. You will, I hope, do me the honor to act as my seconds."

"We will put you in the chair and sit on each side of you. Max, as vice-president, will be opposite to you," said Mignonnet.

"Oh, the scoundrel will have Major Potel and Captain Renard for his seconds," said Carpentier. "In spite of all that is rumored in the town about his nocturnal excursions, those two capital fellows have stood by him before now; they will be faithful to him—"

"You see, uncle, how well the pot is simmering," said Philippe. "Sign nothing before the 3d, for, by the day after, you shall be free, happy, adored by Flore, and rid of your finance minister."

"You do not know him, nephew," exclaimed Rouget in dismay. "Max has killed nine men in duels."

"Yes, but he was not robbing them of a hundred thousand francs a year," replied Philippe.

"A bad conscience spoils a man's hand," said Mignonnet sententiously.

"Within a few days," said Philippe, "you and la Rabouilleuse will be living together like hearts *à la fleur d'orange*, as soon as she has got over her grief; for she will wriggle like a worm, and yelp, and melt into tears; but let the tap run!"

The two officers supported Philippe's arguments, and tried their utmost to put some heart into Père Rouget, with whom they walked for about two hours. At last Philippe escorted his uncle home, saying as his last word: "Come to no decision without consulting me. I know what women are. I paid for one more dearly than Flore will ever cost you. And she taught me how to manage the fair sex for the rest of my days. Women are just naughty children; they are inferior animals to men; we must make them afraid of us, for our worst fate is to be led by the nose by those little brutes!"

It was about two in the afternoon when the old man went in. Kouski opened the door to him, in tears, or, at any rate, in obedience to Maxence's orders, seeming to weep.

"What is the matter?" asked Jean-Jacques.

"Oh, Monsieur! Madame is gone away with Védie."

"Go-o-one?" said the old man, in a voice of anguish.

The blow was so tremendous, that Rouget sat down on one of the steps of the stairs. A moment after, he rose, looked in the sitting-room, in the kitchen, went up to his own room, walked through all the bedrooms, came back into the sitting-room, sank into an armchair, and burst into tears.

"Where is she?" he cried, in the midst of sobs. "Where is she? Where is Max?"

"I do not know," replied Kouski. "The Major went out without saying a word."

Gilet, very astutely, had thought it diplomatic to wander round the town. By leaving the old man alone in his despair, he made him feel how deserted he was, and so made him amenable to his counsels. But to hinder Philippe from supporting his uncle at this crisis, Max had desired Kouski to let no one into the house. Flore being away, the old man had neither bit nor bridle, and the situation was excessively critical.

During his walk through the town Max saw himself avoided by many persons who, only the day before, would have been most eager to come and shake hands with him. There was a general reaction against him. The feats of the Knights of Idlesse were on every tongue. The story of Joseph Bridau's arrest, which was now explained, cast dishonor on Max, whose life and deeds had, in this one day, met with their due reward. Gilet met Major Potel, who was looking for him, and who was quite beside himself.

"What is wrong, Potel?"

"My dear fellow, the Imperial Guard is blackguarded all through the town! The very clerks are abusing you, and that rebounds on me, and goes to my heart."

"What are they complaining of?" asked Max.

"Of the tricks you played at night."

"As if a little amusement were forbidden—"

"Oh! that is nothing," said Potel.

Potel was an officer of the stamp of those who said to a burgomaster, "Pooh! if we burn your town, we will pay for it!" so he was not much concerned by the pranks of the Order.

"What else?" said Gilet.

"The Guard is divided against itself! That is what breaks my heart. It is Bridau who has unchained the town against you. The Guard against the Guard? No; that is all wrong. You cannot retreat, Max; you must meet Bridau. I declare I longed to pick a quarrel with that great scoundrel, and settle him out of hand; then these black coats would not have seen the Guard against the Guard. In war I say nothing against it; two brave fellows have a squabble, they fight it out, and there are no counter-jumpers by to laugh them to scorn.—No, that long rascal never was in the Guards. A man of the Guard ought not to behave so before all these townsfolk against another man of the Guard. Oh! the Guard is scoffed at, and at Issoudun, too, where it used to be respected!"

"Come, Potel, do not fuss over nothing," said Max.

"Even if you should not see me at the anniversary dinner—"

"What! you are not coming to Lacroix's the day after to-morrow?" cried Potel, interrupting his friend. "Why, you will be called a coward; you will seem to be keeping out of Bridau's way! No, no. The foot grenadiers of the Guard must not retreat before the dragoons of the Guard! Arrange your other business as you will, but be there!"

"One more to send to the shades?" said Max. "Come, I think I can manage my business and be there too.—For," said he to himself, "the power of attorney must not be made out to me. As old Héron said, that would look too much like robbery."

The lion, thus entangled in the net laid for him by Philippe Bridau, set his teeth with an inward quiver; he avoided the eye of the persons he met, and went home by the Boulevard Villate, muttering as he walked. "Before I fight I will get those securities," said he to himself. "If I fall, that money, at any rate, shall not go to that Philippe. I will have it placed in Flore's name. By my advice the child must go straight to Paris; and there, if she likes, she may marry the son of some marshal who has had the sack. I will have the power of attorney made out to Baruch, who will not transfer the stock without my orders."

We must do Max the justice to say that he never looked calmer than when his blood and brain were seething. Never in any soldier were the qualities that make a great general combined in a higher degree. If he had not been checked in his career by being taken prisoner, the Emperor would have found in this fellow a man of the sort needful to a vast enterprise.

On going into the room where the victim of all these tragi-comic scenes still sat sobbing, Max inquired the cause of his despair; he was greatly astonished; he knew nothing; he heard, with well-acted surprise, of Flore's departure, and cross-questioned Kouski to throw some light on the purpose of this unaccountable journey.

"Madame just said this," said Kouski; "I was to tell Monsieur that she had taken the twenty thousand francs in gold that were in his desk, thinking that Monsieur would not grudge it her as wages for these two-and-twenty years."

"As wages?" said Rouget.

"Yes," said Kouski. "'Oh, I shall never come back!' She went away saying so to Védie—for poor Védie, who is greatly attached to Monsieur, was putting it to Madame. 'No, no,' says she, 'he has not the least affection for me; he let his nephew treat me like the scum of the earth!' and she was crying too—ever so!"

"What do I care for Philippe!" cried the old man, whom Max was watching. "Where is Flore? How can we find out where she is?"

"Philippe, whose advice you are so ready to take, will help you," said Maxence coldly.

"Philippe?" said the old man; "what can he do with the poor child? There is no one but you, my good Max, who can find Flore; she will come with you; you will bring her back to me."

"I do not wish to find myself in antagonism with Monsieur Bridau," said Max.

"By Heaven!" cried Rouget, "if that is all—he has promised me that he will kill you."

"Ah, ha!" laughed Gilet, "we will see—"

"My dear fellow," said the old man, "find Flore; tell her I will do whatever she wishes—"

"She must have been seen passing by somewhere in the town," said Maxence to Kouski. "Serve dinner, put everything on the table, and then go from place to place, making inquiries, and tell us at dessert what road Mademoiselle Brazier has taken."

This order soothed the poor man for a minute; for he was whimpering like a child that has lost its nurse. At this moment Max, whom Rouget hated as the cause of all his misfortunes, appeared to him as an angel. A passion like Rouget's for Flore is strangely like a child's. At six o'clock

the Pole, who had simply taken a walk, came in and announced that Flore had set out for Vatan.

"Madame is gone back to her native place, that is clear," said Kouski.

"Will you come to Vatan this evening?" asked Max of the old man. "The road is bad, but Kouski drives well, and you will make up your quarrel better at eight o'clock this evening than to-morrow morning."

"Let us be off," cried Rouget.

"Put the horse in very quietly, and try to prevent the town hearing all about this foolish business, for Monsieur Rouget's dignity," said Max. "Saddle my horse, and I will ride ahead," he added in Kouski's ear.

Monsieur Hochon had already sent news of Mademoiselle Brazier's departure to Philippe Bridau, who rose from table at Monsieur Mignonnet's to hurry back to the Place Saint-Jean, for he guessed at once the purpose of this skilful strategy. When Philippe went to his uncle's door Kouski called to him out of a first-floor window that Monsieur Rouget could receive no one.

"Fario," said he to the Spaniard, who was walking in the Grande Narette, "go and tell Benjamin to set out on horseback; I must positively know where my uncle and Maxence are going."

"They are putting the horse to the barouche," said Fario, wo had been watching Rouget' s house.

"If they start for Vatan," replied Philippe, "find a second horse for me, and return with Benjamin to Monsieur Mignonnet's house."

"What do you propose doing?" asked Monsieur Hochon, who came out of his house on seeing Philippe and Fario on the Place.

"A general's skill, my dear Monsieur Hochon, consists not merely in keeping a sharp lookout on the enemy's movements, but also in guessing his intentions from his movements, and constantly modifying his own plan as fast as the foe upsets it by some unexpected tactics. Look here; if my

uncle and Maxence go out together in the chaise, they are going to Vatan; Maxence will have promised to reconcile him to Flore, who *fugit ad salices*—for this manœuvre is General Virgil's. If this is their game, I don't know what I shall do. But I have the night before me, for my uncle cannot sign a power of attorney at ten o'clock at night; notaries are in bed.

"If, as the pawing of a second horse suggests to me, Max is going ahead to give Flore her instructions before she sees my uncle—as seems necessary and probable—the rascal is done for! You will see how we play a return match in the game of inheritance, we soldiers. And since, for this last hand in the game, I need an assistant, I am going back to Mignonnet's to make arrangements with my friend Carpentier."

After shaking hands with Monsieur Hochon, Philippe went down the Petite Narette to see Major Mignonnet. Ten minutes later, Monsieur Hochon saw Maxence set out at a hard gallop; and being curious, as old men are, he was so much interested that he remained standing at the window waiting to hear the rattle of the *demi-fortune*, which was soon audible. Rouget's impatience brought him out twenty minutes after Max. Kouski, in obedience to his real master, was driving slowly—at any rate, in the town.

"If they get off to Paris, all is lost!" said Monsieur Hochon to himself.

At this moment a little boy from the Roman suburb came to Monsieur Hochon's door; he had a letter for Baruch. The old man's two grandsons, very humble since the morning, had of their own accord stayed at home. Reflecting on the future, they well understood how wise they would be to humor their grandparents. Baruch could not but know how great his grandfather Hochon's influence would be over his grandfather and grandmother Borniche; Monsieur Hochon would not fail to secure the lion's share of all their money to Adolphine if his conduct should justify them in founding their hopes on such a grand marriage as they had threatened

him with that morning. Baruch, being much richer than Francois, had much to lose: so he was in favor of complete submission, making no conditions but that his debt to Max should be paid.

Francois' prospects were entirely in his grandfather's hands; he had no fortune to look for but from him, since, from the account of his guardianship, the youth was his debtor. So the two young men made solemn promises, their repentance being stimulated by their damaged prospects, and Madame Hochon had reassured them as to the money they owed to Maxence.

"You have played the fool!" said she. "Repair the mischief by good conduct, and Monsieur Hochon will be mollified."

Thus, when Francois had read the letter over Baruch's shoulder, he said in his ear:

"Ask grandpapa what he thinks of it."

"Here," said Baruch, handing the letter to the old man. "Read it to me; I have not got my spectacles."

"MY DEAR FRIEND—I hope you will not hesitate, in the serious position in which I am placed, to do me a service by accepting the office of Monsieur Rouget's attorney. Pray be at Vatan by nine o'clock to-morrow. I shall no doubt send you to Paris; but be quite easy, I will give you money for the journey, and join you ere long, for I am almost certain to be obliged to leave Issoudun on the 3d of December. Adieu; I rely on your friendship, and you many rely on mine. MAXENCE."

"God be praised!" said Monsieur Hochon, "that idiot's fortune is safe from the clutches of those devils!"

"It must be so, since you say it," observed Madame Hochon, "and I thank God for it; He no doubt has heard my prayers. The triumph of the wicked is always brief."

"Go to Vatan, and accept the office of attorney to Monsieur Rouget," said the old man to Baruch. "You will be

desired to transfer stock bearing fifty thousand francs' interest to the name of Mademoiselle Brazier. Set out for Paris, but stop at Orleans, and wait till you hear from me. Tell no one whatever where you put up, and go to the last inn you see in the Faubourg Bannier, even if it is but a carrier's house of call."

"Hey day!" cried Francois, who had rushed to the window at the sound of carriage-wheels in the Grande Narette; "here is something new! Père Rouget and Monsieur Philippe have come home together in the carriage, Benjamin and Monsieur Carpentier following them on horseback—"

"I will go across," cried Monsieur Hochon, his curiosity getting the upper hand of every other feeling.

Monsieur Hochon found old Rouget in his room, writing the following letter from his nephew's dictation:

"MADEMOISELLE—If you do not set out the instant you receive this letter to return to me, your conduct will show so much ingratitude for all my kindness, that I shall revoke my will in your favor, and leave my whole fortune to my nephew Philippe. You must also understand that if Monsieur Gilet is with you at Vatan, he can never again live under my roof. I intrust this letter to Monsieur Carpentier to be delivered to you, and I hope you will listen to his advice, for he will speak to you as I should myself.

"Yours affectionately,

"J.-J. ROUGET."

"Captain Carpentier and I happened to meet my uncle," said Philippe to Monsieur Hochon with bitter irony. "He was so foolish as to intend going to Vatan to seek Mademoiselle Brazier and Major Gilet. I explained to my uncle that he was running headforemost into a trap. Will not that woman throw him over as soon as he shall have signed the power of attorney she insists on to enable her to transfer to herself the stock for fifty thousand francs a year? By writing this letter, will he not see her back here to-night, under his

roof—the fair deserter! I promise I will make Mademoiselle as pliant as a reed for the rest of her life, if only my uncle will allow me to take the place of Monsieur Gilet, who, in my opinion, is certainly not in the right place here. Am I not right?—And my uncle wrings his hands!"

"My good neighbor," said Monsieur Hochon, "you have taken the best means for securing peace in your house. If you will listen to me, you will destroy your will, and then you will see Flore once more all that she was in former days."

"No; she will never forgive me for making her so unhappy," said the old man, weeping; "she will never love me again."

"Yes, she will love you, and heartily too," said Philippe. "I will see to that."

"But open your eyes, man!" said Monsieur Hochon to Rouget. "They only want to rob you and desert you!"

"Oh, if I were only sure of that!" said the poor creature.

"Look here. This is a letter written by Maxence to my grandson Borniche," said old Hochon. "Read it."

"The wretch!" exclaimed Carpentier, as he heard the letter which Rouget read through his tears.

"Is that clear enough, uncle?" asked Philippe. "I tell you, bind the minx to you by interest and you will be adored—as you can be—half thread and half cotton!"

"She is too fond of Maxence; she will throw me over!" said the old man piteously.

"I tell you, uncle, by the day after to-morrow either I or Maxence will have ceased to leave our tracks on the streets of Issoudun—"

"Well," said the poor fellow, "go, Monsieur Carpentier; if you promise me that she will come back, go. You are a man to be depended on; say to her all you think fit in my name."

"Captain Carpentier will whisper in her ear that I am having a lady here from Paris who is a little gem of youth and beauty," said Philippe, "and the minx will come back as fast as she can drive."

The Captain set out, driving himself in the old chaise; Benjamin accompanied him on horseback, for Kouski was not to be found. Though the two officers had threatened him with an action and the loss of his place, the Pole had fled to Vatan on a hired horse, to warn Maxence and Flore of their adversary's bold game.

Carpentier, who did not choose to return with la Rabouilleuse, was to ride back on Benjamin's horse when he had carried out his mission.

On hearing of Kouski's desertion, Philippe said to Benjamin:

"You can take his place here this evening. Try to climb up at the back of the chaise without being seen by Flore, so as to be here by the time she is."

"Things are shaping! Daddy Hochon!" said the Colonel. "There will be fun at the banquet the day after to morrow."

"And you will settle yourself here," said the old miser.

"I have told Fario to send in all my things. I shall sleep in the room that opens on to the same landing as Gilet's; my uncle agrees."

"Oh! what will come of all this?" cried the old man in dismay.

"Mademoiselle Flore Brazier will come of it, within a few hours, as mild as a Paschal lamb," replied Monsieur Hochon.

"God grant it!" said Jean-Jacques, drying away his tears.

"It is now seven o'clock," said Philippe. "The queen of your heart will be here by about half-past eleven. You will see no more of Gilet; will you not be as happy as a Pope?—If you want me to succeed," Philippe added in Monsieur Hochon's ear, "remain with us till that she-ape comes; you will help me to keep the old fellow at the sticking-point; and then, between us, we can make Mademoiselle la Rabouilleuse understand where her true interests lie."

Monsieur Hochon kept Philippe company, seeing that there was sense in his request; but they both had their hands full, for Père Rouget gave himself up to childish lamenta-

tions, which were not checked by the arguments Philippe repeated ten times over:

"Well, uncle, if Flore comes back and is affectionate to you, you will admit that I am right. You will be made much of; you will keep your income; you will be guided for the future by my advice, and all will go on like Paradise."

When at half-past eleven the sound of wheels was heard in the Grande Narette, the question was whether the carriage had returned empty or full. Rouget's face wore an expression of indescribable anguish, which gave way to the reaction of excessive joy when, as the chaise turned to come in, he saw in it the two women.

"Kouski," said Philippe, giving his hand to Flore to get out, "you are dismissed from Monsieur Rouget's service. You are not to sleep here to-night, so pack your things; Benjamin here will fill your place."

"So you are master?" said Flore, with a sneer.

"By your leave!" retorted Philippe, holding Flore's hand as in a vise. "Come with me; we have to *rabouiller* our hearts, you and I."

Philippe led the woman, dumfounded, out a few yards on to the Place Saint-Jean.

"Now, my beauty; the day after to-morrow Gilet will be sent to the shades below by this right arm," said the officer, holding it out, "or he will have caught me off my guard. If I fall, you will be the mistress in my uncle's house—*bene sit!* If I am left standing on my pegs, you have got to keep him in happiness of the very first quality. Otherwise, I know plenty of Rabouilleuses in Paris, prettier than you, without any injustice to you, for they are but seventeen; they would make my uncle very happy, and not fail to take my part. Begin your task this very evening, for if the old man is not as lively as a chaffinch to-morrow, I have only one thing to say to you —and mark my words—There is only one way of killing a man without the law having a word to say to it, and that is by fighting a duel; but when it comes to a woman—I know three ways of getting rid of her. There, my pigeon!"

All through this address Flore had been shaking like an ague-patient.

"Kill Max—" she said, looking at Philippe in the moonlight.

"Now, go. See, here is my uncle . . ."

In fact, old Rouget, in spite of all that Monsieur Hochon could say, had come out into the street to take Flore by the hand, as a miser might have sought his treasure. He led her into the house and into his room, and locked the door.

"This is good Saint-Lambert's Day, those who leave must stay away," said Benjamin to the Pole.

"Oh, my master will shut all your mouths," retorted Kouski, going off to join Max, who put up at the Hotel de la Poste.

Next day, from nine till eleven, all the women were gossiping at the house-doors. All through the town nothing was talked of but the wonderful revolution carried out the day before in Père Rouget's household. The upshot of these discussions was everywhere the same.

"What will happen between Max and Colonel Bridau at the Anniversary banquet to-morrow?"

To Védie, Philippe spoke a few words—"An annuity of six hundred francs—or dismissal!" which reduced her to neutrality for the time between two such formidable powers as Philippe and Flore.

Knowing Max's life to be imperilled, Flore was sweeter to old Rouget than even in the early days of their housekeeping. Alas! in love affairs, interested fraud overrides sincerity, and that is why so many men pay clever beguilers so dear. La Rabouilleuse remained invisible next morning till breakfast time, when she came down, giving her arm to Père Rouget. The tears rose to her eyes as she saw in Max's seat the terrible veteran with his gloomy blue eye and ominously calm face.

"What ails you, Mademoiselle?" said he, after wishing his uncle good-morning.

"What ails her, nephew, is that she cannot bear the idea of your fighting Major Gilet—"

"I have not the slightest wish to kill your Gilet," replied Philippe. "He has only to clear out of Issoudun and ship himself to America with a parcel of merchandise; I should be the first to advise you to give him some money to invest in the best class of goods, and to wish him good luck! He will make a fortune, and it would be more creditable than running riot through the town o' nights—not to mention playing the devil in your house."

"Well, that is very handsome, eh!" said Rouget, turning to Flore.

"To A-me-ri-ca!" said she, sobbing.

"He would be better off kicking his heels in New York than tucked up in a deal box in France. But, of course, you may say he is a crack hand; he may kill me!" remarked the Colonel.

"Will you allow me to speak to him?" said Flore, in a quite humble and submissive tone, to Philippe.

"Certainly, and he may come and take away all his things. But I shall stay with my uncle meanwhile; for I do not intend to leave the old man any more," replied Philippe.

"Védie," called Flore, "run to the Poste, woman, and tell the Major that I beg him to—"

"To come and fetch away his things," said Philippe, interrupting Flore.

"Yes, yes, Védie. That will be the best excuse for asking him to come; I want to speak to him."

Fear so completely overpowered hatred in this woman, and her dismay at meeting a strong and ruthless will, when hitherto she had always met with adulation, was so great, that she was beginning to give way before Philippe, as poor old Rouget had given way before her. She awaited with anxiety Védie's return; but Védie came back with a positive refusal from Max, who begged Mademoiselle Brazier to send all his possessions to the Hotel de la Poste.

"Will you let me take them to him?" she asked old Rouget.

"Yes—but you promise to come back?" said the old man.

"If Mademoiselle is not here by midday, at one o'clock you will give me a power of attorney to transfer your securities," said Philippe, looking at Flore. "Take Védie for the sake of appearances, Mademoiselle. Henceforth we must guard my uncle's honor."

Flore could get nothing out of Maxence. The Major, in his disgust at having allowed himself to be ousted from his disgraceful position before the eyes of the whole town, was too proud to retreat before Philippe. La Rabouilleuse combated his arguments by proposing to her lover that they should fly together to America; but Gilet, who did not want Flore without Père Rouget's fortune, while he would not let the woman see to the bottom of his heart, persisted in saying that he meant to kill Philippe.

"We have committed a stupid blunder," said he. "We ought to have gone, all three of us, to spend the winter in Paris. But how could we imagine from looking at that gaunt carcass that things would turn out as they have done? Events have come with such a rush that it has turned my brain. I took the Colonel for a swashbuckler without two ideas; that was my mistake. Since I was not sharp enough in the first instance to double like a hare, I should be a coward now if I yielded an inch to the Colonel; he has ruined me in the opinion of the town; only his death can rehabilitate me."

"Go to America with forty thousand francs. I will find some way of getting rid of that savage; I will join you there; it will be much wiser . . ."

"What would people think of me?" he exclaimed, stung by the thought of the "jaw." "No. Besides, I have already settled nine. That fellow can be no great duellist, it seems to me. He left school to go into the army; he was always in the wars till 1815, since that he has been travelling in America; so my bulldog can never have set foot in a fencing school, while I have no match at sword-play. The cav-

alry sword is his arm; I shall seem magnanimous by proposing it—for I shall try to make him insult me, and I will make short work of him. Decidedly that is the best thing to do. Be easy; we shall be masters again the day after to-morrow."

Thus with Max a foolish point of honor outweighed rational policy. Flore was at home by one o'clock, and shut herself into her room to cry at her ease. All that day gossip wagged its tongue freely in Issoudun, for a duel between Maxence and Philippe was considered inevitable.

"Ah! Monsieur Hochon," said Mignonnet, who met the old man on the Boulevard Baron, where the Captain was walking with Carpentier, "we are very anxious, for Gilet is equally strong with all weapons."

"Never mind," said the old provincial diplomat, "Philippe has managed the whole business very well—and I never should have believed that that long, free-and-easy rascal would have succeeded so quickly. Those two fellows rolled up to meet each other like two storm-clouds—"

"Oh," said Carpentier, "Philippe is a very deep customer. His conduct before the Supreme Court was a masterpiece of skill."

"Hallo! Captain Renard," said a townsman, "they say that wolves do not eat each other, but it seems that Max is going to try a ripping match with Colonel Bridau. It will be no child's play between men of the old Guard!"

"And you can laugh at it, you townsmen. Because the poor fellow liked a lark at night, you owe him a grudge," said Major Potel. "But Gilet is a man who could never stay in such a hole as Issoudun without finding something to do."

"Well, well, gentlemen," said another, "Max and the Colonel have played the game out. Was not the Colonel bound to avenge his brother Joseph? Do you remember Max's treachery toward that poor fellow?"

"Bah! an artist!" said Renard.

"But Père Rouget's leavings are in the balance. They say that Monsieur Gilet was about to pounce on fifty thou-

sand francs a year when the Colonel went to live under his uncle's roof."

"Gilet—steal anybody's money?—Look here, Monsieur Canivet, do not say that anywhere but here, or we will make you eat your words without any sauce to them."

But worthy Colonel Bridau had the good wishes of all the townspeople.

On the morrow, at about four o'clock, the officers of the Imperial army who resided at Issoudun, or in the neighborhood, were walking to and fro on the market-place, in front of an eating-house kept by one Lacroix, waiting for Philippe Bridau. The banquet in honor of the anniversary of the Coronation was fixed for five o'clock, military time. Several groups were discussing Maxence's affairs and his eviction from Rouget's house, for the private soldiers had also agreed to hold a meeting at a tavern on the Place. Of all the officers, Potel and Renard alone attempted to defend their friend.

"Is it our part to interfere in what goes on between two heirs?" said Renard.

"Max is soft to women," remarked Potel the cynic.

"Swords will be drawn before long," said a retired sub-lieutenant, who now cultivated a market-garden in the upper Baltan. "Though Monsieur Maxence was a fool to go to live with Père Rouget, he would be a coward to take his dismissal like a servant without asking the reason."

"Certainly," replied Mignonnet dryly. "When an act of folly fails, it becomes a crime."

Max, who presently joined the old Bonapartist soldiers, was received with very significant silence. Potel and Renard each took an arm, and led Max a little way off to talk to him. At this moment Philippe appeared in the distance in full dress; he dragged his cane with an imperturbable air that contrasted with the deep attention Max was obliged to give to what his two last friends were saying. Philippe shook hands with Mignonnet, Carpentier, and a few others. This reception, so unlike that which Max had just met with, finally

dispelled from the mind of the latter certain dawnings of cowardice—or of prudence, if you please—to which Flore's entreaties, and, above all, her affection, had given rise when at last he had been left face to face with himself.

"We will fight," said he to Captain Renard, "and to the death! So talk to me no more; leave me to play my part out."

After these words, spoken in a fever of excitement, the three men rejoined the other groups of officers. Max bowed first to Bridau, who returned the compliment with a very cold stare.

"Come, gentlemen; to dinner," said Major Potel.

"And to drink to the imperishable glory of the little Crop-head, who is now in the paradise of the brave," cried Renard.

All the party, feeling that the business of dinner would put them in better countenance, understood the little Light-horse Captain's intentions. They hurried into the long, low dining-room of the Restaurant Lacroix, of which the windows looked out on the market-place. Each guest at once took his seat at table, and the adversaries found themselves face to face, as Philippe had requested. Several of the youth of the town, especially the ex-Knights of Idlesse, somewhat uneasy as to what might take place at this dinner, walked about outside, discussing the critical position in which Philippe had contrived to place Maxence Gilet. They deplored the collision, while admitting that a duel was necessary.

All went well till dessert, though the two fighting men kept a sort of watch on each other, not far removed from uneasiness, in spite of the apparent cheerfulness of the meal. Pending the quarrel, which both, no doubt, were meditating, Philippe was admirably cool and Max boisterously gay; but, to the connoisseur, each was playing a part.

When dessert was on the table, Philippe said:

"Fill your glasses, my friends; I claim permission to propose our first toast."

"He said 'My friends'; do not fill your glass," said Renard in Max's ear.

But Max poured out some wine.

"The Grand Army!" cried Philippe with genuine enthusiasm.

"The Grand Army!" was repeated like one word by every voice.

At this moment in the doorway there appeared eleven private soldiers, among them Benjamin and Kouski, who all repeated, "The Grand Army!"

"Come in, boys; we are going to drink to *his* health," said Major Potel.

The old soldiers came in, and remained standing behind the officers.

"You see, he is not really dead!" said Kouski to an old sergeant, who had, no doubt, been deploring the Emperor's long agony, now at last ended.

"I claim the second toast," said Major Mignonnet.

A few of the dessert dishes were disturbed to keep up appearances. Mignonnet rose.

"To those who tried to reinstate *his* son!" said he.

Every one, with the exception of Maxence Gilet, lifted his glass to Philippe Bridau.

"It is my turn," said Max, rising.

"Max!—it is Max!" they were saying outside. Deep silence reigned within and on the market-place, for Gilet's temper led them to expect some provocation.

"May we *all* meet here again this day twelvemonth!" and he bowed ironically to Philippe.

"He is coming on!" said Kouski to his neighbor.

"The Paris police did not allow you to hold such banquets as this," said Major Potel to Philippe.

"Why the devil need you speak of the police to Colonel Bridau?" asked Maxence Gilet insolently.

"Major Potel meant no harm on *his* part," said Philippe, with a bitter smile. The silence was so complete that a fly would have been heard if there had been any.

"The police is sufficiently afraid of me," said Philippe, "to have sent me to Issoudun, a place where I have had the good luck to find a few of the right old sort. But it must be confessed that there is not much amusement to be found here. For a man who was not averse to the ladies I have come off but badly. However, I will save my money for the pretty dears—for I am not one of the men who find their fortune in a feather-bed, and Mariette of the opera-house cost me no end of money."

"Is it for my benefit that you say that, my dear Colonel," said Max, firing a glance like an electric shock at Philippe.

"If the cap fits, Major Gilet."

"Colonel, my two friends here, Renard and Potel, will call to-morrow morning—"

"On Mignonnet and Carpentier," interrupted Philippe, waving his hand to his two neighbors.

"Now," said Max, "go on with the toasts."

Neither of the antagonists had raised his voice above the ordinary tone of conversation; nothing was solemn but the silence in which they were heard.

"Look here, you fellows," said Philippe, looking at the privates, "remember, our affairs are no concern of the townsfolk!—Not a word of what has just been said; it must remain a secret with the old Guard."

"They will obey orders, Colonel," said Renard; "I will answer for them."

"Long live the youngster! May he reign in France!" cried Potel.

"Death to the Englishman!" added Carpentier, and this toast was enthusiastically drunk.

"Shame on Hudson Lowe!" said Captain Renard.

The dessert went off very well, with ample libations. The two antagonists regarded it as a point of honor that this duel, in which an immense fortune was at stake, while the combatants were both men so noted for their courage, should have no feature in common with a vulgar quarrel. Two gentlemen, in the best sense, could not have behaved

better than Max and Philippe. The expectations of the young men and townspeople who had gathered on the market-place were disappointed.

All the guests, as brother-soldiers, kept the secret of the episode at dessert. At ten o'clock the two principals were informed that the sword was the weapon decided on. The spot selected for the meeting was behind the apse of the Capuchin chapel, at eight next morning. Goddet, who had been present at the dinner, having formerly served as surgeon-major, had been requested to attend. Whatever came of it, the seconds agreed that the fighting was not to last for more than ten minutes.

At eleven o'clock that night, to the Colonel's great surprise, just as he was going to bed, Monsieur Hochon brought his wife over to see him.

"We know what is happening," said the old lady, her eyes full of tears, "and I have come to beseech you not to go out to-morrow morning without saying your prayers. Lift up your soul to God."

"Yes, Madame," said Philippe, to whom old Hochon was signalling from behind his wife.

"That is not all," said Agathe's godmother; "I put myself in your poor mother's place, and I have deprived myself of my most precious possession. Look here!" and she held out to Philippe a tooth fastened to a piece of black velvet embroidered with gold, to which two ends of green ribbon were sewn; after showing it to Philippe, she replaced it in a little bag. "It is a relic of Saint Solange, the patron saint of le Berry; I saved it at the time of the Revolution; wear it on your breast to-morrow."

"Can it protect me against a sword-stroke?" asked Philippe.

"Yes," replied the old lady.

"Then I can no more wear that paraphernalia than I could wear a breastplate," cried Agathe's son.

"What does he mean?" asked Madame Hochon of her husband.

"He says it is not fair play," replied old Hochon.

"Very well; say no more about it," said she. "I will pray for you."

"Well, Madame, a mouthful of prayers and a straight thrust can do no harm," said the Colonel, making as though he would pierce Monsieur Hochon through the heart.

The old lady insisted on kissing Philippe on the forehead. Then, as she went out, she gave Benjamin ten crowns, all the money she had, to induce him to sew the relic into his master's trousers-pocket. Which Benjamin did, not believing in the virtue of the bone—for his master, said he, had a much larger one to pick with Gilet—but because he was bound to fulfil a commission so handsomely paid for. Madame Hochon went home firmly trusting in Saint Solange.

At eight next morning, in overcast weather, Max, with his two seconds and Kouski, arrived on the little plot of grass which at that time surrounded the apse of the old Capuchin church. There they found Philippe and his party with Benjamin. Potel and Mignonnet measured twenty-five paces. At each end of the line the two men marked a crease with a spade. Neither of the combatants could retreat beyond the mark under pain of cowardice; each man was to stand on his line, and advance as far as he pleased, when the seconds cried "Go!"

"Shall we take our coats off?" said Philippe coldly to Gilet.

"By all means, Colonel," said Maxence, with the confidence of an old hand.

The two men kept on only their trousers, the flesh showing pink through their cambric shirts. Armed with cavalry swords, carefully chosen of the same weight—about three pounds, and the same length—three feet, the two men took their stand, their swords pointed downward, awaiting the signal. Both were so calm, that in spite of the cold their muscles quivered no more than if they had been of bronze. Goddet, the four seconds, and the two soldiers felt an involuntary thrill.

"They are a fine couple!"

The exclamation broke from Major Potel.

At the moment when the word "Go!" was spoken, Maxence caught sight of Fario's ominous face; he was looking at them from the hole made by the Knights of the Order to put the pigeons through into his store. Those eyes, from which hatred and revenge shot like two showers of flame, dazzled Max.

The Colonel made straight for his antagonist, putting himself on guard in such a way as to secure the advantage. Experts in the art of killing know that the more skilful of two swordsmen can take the upper hand, to use an expression that suggests by a figure of speech the effect of the superior guard. This attitude, which allows a man in some degree to see what is coming, so effectually proclaims a duellist of the first class that a sense of his own inferiority sank deep into Max's soul, producing that flutter of mind which is the ruin of a gambler when, face to face with a master-hand or a man in luck, he is disconcerted, and plays worse than usual.

"Ah, the wretch!" said Max to himself. "He is more than my match. I am done for!"

Max tried a circular flourish, wielding his sword with the skill of a player at single stick; he wanted to dazzle Philippe's eye and strike his weapon, so as to disarm him; but at the first touch he felt that the Colonel had a wrist of iron, as flexible as a steel spring. Maxence had to find some other stroke; and he, wretched man, wanted to think, while Philippe, whose eyes sparkled more vividly than the flashing steel, parried every attack as coolly as a fencing master in pads in a school of arms.

Between two men, when both are so skilful as these combatants, the issue depends on a circumstance somewhat like that which decides the event of the horrible kicking matches among the common people, known as the *Savate*. The victory depends on a false move, on a mistake in the distance, as sudden as a lightning flash, which must be followed up

instantly. For a certain time, as short to the spectators as it seems long to the adversaries, the fight consists in watchfulness, absorbing every power of mind and body, but hidden under feints apparently so slow and so cautious that it might be supposed that neither of the men meant business. This instant, followed by a swift and decisive struggle, is agonizing to the skilled beholder. Max presently parried badly, and the Colonel struck the sword out of his hand.

"Pick it up!" he said, pausing in the fight. "I am not the man to kill a disarmed foe."

It was the sublime of ruthlessness. This generosity showed such certain superiority that it was regarded as the cleverest design by the lookers-on. In fact, when Max took up his guard again he had lost his presence of mind, and again, of course, found himself below the high guard which threatened him while covering his adversary. Then he hoped to retrieve his shameful defeat by a daring blow; he no longer tried to guard himself; he took his sword in both hands and rushed furiously on the Colonel, to wound him mortally, while allowing himself to be killed. Though Philippe received a sword-stroke which cut his forehead and part of his face, he split Max's skull obliquely by a terrible swashing cut, intended to break the murderous blow Max meant to deal him. These two frantic cuts ended the fight in nine minutes. Fario came down to feast his eyes on the sight of his enemy's death-struggle, for in a man so powerful as Max the muscles twitch frightfully. Philippe was carried to his uncle's house.

Thus died one of those men destined to achieve great things if he had but remained in the position to which he was fitted; a man who was a spoiled child of nature, endowed with courage, cool blood, and the political astuteness of a Cæsar Borgia. But education had not given him that loftiness of mind and conduct without which no achievement is possible in any walk of life. He was not regretted, for the insidious action of his adversary—a more worthless creature than himself—had succeeded in lowering him in

public regard. His death put an end to the exploits of the Knights of Idlesse, to the great satisfaction of the town of Issoudun. Philippe got into no trouble in consequence of this duel, which indeed appeared to be the outcome of Divine vengeance, and of which the details were discussed through all the neighborhood with unanimous praise of the two antagonists.

"They ought to have killed each other," said Monsieur Mouilleron. "That would have been a good riddance for the Government."

Flore Brazier's position would have been a very embarrassing one but for the severe illness produced by Max's death; she had an attack on the brain, complicated by dangerous inflammation, brought on by the fatigues and shocks of the last three days. If she had been in her usual health, she might perhaps have fled from the house where, just beneath her, in Max's room and Max's bed, lay Max's murderer. For three months she hovered between life and death under the treatment of Monsieur Goddet, who also attended Philippe.

As soon as Philippe could hold a pen he wrote the following letters:

"*To Monsieur Desroches, Attorney-at-Law:*

"I have already killed the more venomous of the two beasts, not without getting a hole in my head from a sword-cut, but the rascal happily struck with a dead hand. There remains another viper with whom I must try to come to some understanding, for to my uncle she is as his very gizzard. I was much afraid lest this Rabouilleuse, who is devilish handsome, should take herself off, for my uncle would have gone after her; but the shock which came upon her at an evil moment has nailed her to her bed. If God were gracious to me, He would take her to Himself while she repents of her sins. Meanwhile, thanks to Monsieur Hochon—the old man is well—I have the doctor on my side, named Goddet, a good

apostle, who opines that an uncle's inheritance is better placed in his nephew's hands than in those of such a minx. Monsieur Hochon exerts some influence over one Fichet, who has a rich daughter, on whom Goddet has an eye as a wife for his son; so that the thousand-franc note that has been dangled before him for curing my nut has little to do with his devotion. This Goddet, formerly Surgeon-Major in the Third Line Regiment, has also been 'talked to' by my friends, two brave officers, Mignonnet and Carpentier, so that he is humbugging his other patient.

"'There is a God after all, you see, my dear,' says he, feeling her pulse. 'You have caused a great misfortune; you must repair the mischief. The hand of God is in all this. (What the hand of God is made to do is incredible!) Religion is religion; submit, be resigned; to begin with, it will calm your mind, and do as much to cure you as my drugs. Above all, remain here to take care of your master. And then, forgive! Forgiveness is the law of the Christian.'

"This Goddet has promised that he will keep la Rabouilleuse in bed for three months. Perhaps the woman will insensibly become accustomed to our living under the same roof. I have secured the cook on my side. The abominable old thing tells her mistress that Max would have made life very hard for her. She declares that she heard the dead man say that if after the old man's death he should be obliged to marry Flore, he did not mean to clog his career with a hussy. And the cook even insinuated that Max would have found means to get rid of her.

"So all is well. My uncle, by old Hochon's advice, has destroyed his will."

"*To Monsieur Giroudeau, at Mademoiselle Florentine's, Rue de Vendôme au Marais:*

"MY OLD COMRADE—Find out whether that little puss Césarine is engaged, and try to persuade her to be in readiness to come to Issoudun as soon as I ask her. The little

slut must then start by return of post. She must get herself up respectably, and shed everything that smacks of the side-scenes; she would have to figure in the country as the daughter of a brave soldier killed on the field of honor. So the primmest behavior, a school-girl fit-out, and first-class virtue —these are the order of the day. If I should need her, and if she is a success, at my uncle's death she shall have fifty thousand francs. If she is busy, explain the case to Florentine, and find me, between you, some little walking lady who can play the part.

"I had my scalp peeled in the duel with my fortune-grabber, and it has given my eye a twist. I will tell you all about it. Ah! old man, we will see good times yet, and have plenty of fun with others—not the same others. If you can forward me five hundred flimsies, I can find use for them. Ta-ta, old cock. Light your pipe with this document. It must be understood that the officer's daughter hails from Châteauroux, and professes to be in need of help. However, I hope not to be obliged to have recourse to this dangerous game. Remember me to Mariette and all our friends."

Agathe, on hearing from Madame Hochon, hastened to Issoudun, and was received by her brother, who gave her Philippe's old room. The poor mother, whose heart was soft again toward her villanous son, enjoyed a few happy days while hearing the citizens of Issoudun sing the Colonel's praises.

"After all, dear child," said Madame Hochon on the day of Agathe's arrival, "youth must have its day. The follies of soldiers who served the Emperor cannot be the same as those of sons looked after by respectable fathers. If only you could know all the tricks that wretch Max would play here by night! Now, thanks to your son, Issoudun breathes and sleeps in peace. Judgment came late to Philippe, but it came; as he told us, three months' imprisonment in the Luxembourg leaves a little ballast in the brain; in short, his conduct here has delighted Monsieur Hochon, and he has

won general respect. If your son can but remain a little while out of the way of the temptations of Paris, he will end by giving you every satisfaction."

Agathe, as she heard these comforting words, looked at her godmother with eyes full of happy tears.

Philippe played the good boy to his mother; he wanted to make use of her. This astute diplomatist did not want to have recourse to Césarine unless he found himself the object of Flore's aversion. He understood that Flore was an admirable tool, molded by Maxence, and to his uncle a habit of life; he meant to make use of her rather than of a Parisian, who might have made the old man marry her. Just as Fouché advised Louis XVIII. to lie between Napoleon's sheets rather than to grant the Charter, Philippe would have liked to lie quietly between Gilet's sheets. Still, he did not wish to cast a slur on the reputation he had just made in the province. Now, to carry on Max's relations with la Rabouilleuse would be as odious on his part as on the woman's. He might, without discredit, live under his uncle's roof and at his uncle's expense, in consideration of his relationship; but he could have nothing to say to Flore unless she were rehabilitated. In the meshes of these difficulties, the admirable plan occurred to him of making la Rabouilleuse his aunt. So, with this scheme unrevealed, he begged his mother to go to see the woman and show her some affection, treating her as a sister-in-law.

"I confess, my dear mother," said he, with a sanctimonious air, and looking at Monsieur and Madame Hochon, who had come to sit with their dear Agathe, "that my uncle's way of life is unseemly; he has only to legalize matters to win the respect of the town for Mademoiselle Brazier. Would it not be better for her to be Madame Rouget than the housekeeper-mistress of an old bachelor? Is it not a simpler matter to acquire legal rights by marriage than to try to oust a family of legitimate heirs?—If you, Monsieur Hochon, or some worthy priest, would speak of this affair, it would put an end to a scandal that offends respectable people. Then

Mademoiselle Brazier would be made happy by finding herself welcomed by you as a sister and by me as an aunt."

Next day Madame Hochon and Agathe stood by Mademoiselle Flore Brazier's bedside, where they set forth to the invalid and to Rouget all Philippe's admirable sentiments. The Colonel was lauded throughout the town as a man of lofty and excellent character, especially in his conduct with regard to Flore. For a whole month the advantages to be derived from her marriage with old Rouget were impressed on Flore by Père Goddet, her doctor—a powerful influence over the mind of a patient—by good Madame Hochon speaking in behalf of religion, and by the gentle and pious Agathe.

Then, when fascinated by the idea of being Madame Rouget and a respectable and respected citizen's wife, she was only eager to be well and celebrate the wedding, it was not difficult to make her understand that she could not become one of the old family of Rouget by turning Philippe out of doors.

"And, after all," said old Goddet, "is it not to him that you owe this high preferment? Max would never have allowed you to marry Père Rouget. And then," he whispered in her ear, "if you have children, will not Max be avenged? The Bridaus will get nothing."

Two months after the fatal event, in February, 1823, the invalid, by the advice of all about her, and implored by Rouget, received Philippe, whose scar made her weep, but whose manner to her, softened almost to affection, soothed her greatly. By Philippe's desire he was left alone with his future aunt.

"My dear girl," said the soldier, "I, from the first, have advised that you should marry my uncle; and if you consent, it can be done as soon as you are recovered—"

"So I am told," said she.

"It is only natural that as circumstances compelled me to do you an injury, I want to do you as much good as possible.

A fortune, a position, and a family are worth more than you have lost. At my uncle's death you would not long have been that fellow's wife, for I have heard from his friends that he had no happy lot in store for you! Look here, my dear child, let us understand each other. We will all live happily. You are to be my aunt—nothing but my aunt.

"You must take care that my uncle does not forget me in his will; on my part, you shall see how I will have you provided for in the settlements. Keep calm, think it over; we will speak of it again. As you see, the most sensible people, all the town, advise you to abandon an illegal position; and nobody objects to your seeing me. Every one understands that in life sentiment must give way to interest. You will be handsomer than ever on your marriage day. Your illness, by leaving you pale, has given you a distinguished air. If my uncle were not so desperately in love with you, on my honor," said he, rising and kissing her hand, "you would be the wife of Colonel Bridau."

Philippe went away, leaving this last speech in Flore's mind to arouse a vague idea of revenge, which smiled on the woman, who was almost happy at having seen this terrible personage at her feet. Philippe had just played, in little, the scene that Richard III. plays with the queen he has lately made a widow. The upshot of the scene shows that interest wrapped up in feeling strikes very deeply into the heart, and dispels the most genuine grief. This is how, in private life, Nature allows herself to accomplish what in works of genius is a master-stroke of art; interest is the means by which she works, the genius of money.

Thus, in the beginning of April, 1823, Jean-Jacques Rouget's room presented the spectacle of a magnificent dinner in honor of the signing of a marriage-contract between Mademoiselle Flore Brazier and the old bachelor. No one was at all surprised. The guests were Monsieur Héron; the four witnesses—Messieurs Mignonnet, Carpentier, Ho-

chon and the elder Goddet; the Maire and the parish priest; Agathe Bridau, Madame Hochon, and her friend Madame Borniche, that is to say, the two old women who were authoritative in Issoudun. And the bride was keenly alive to this concession, won for her by Philippe, the ladies regarding it as a mark of protection needed by a penitent damsel. Flore was dazzlingly beautiful. The curé, who had for a fortnight been catechising the ignorant Rabouilleuse, was to give her next morning her first Communion.

This wedding was the subject of the following article, published in the "Journal du Cher" at Bourges, and in the "Journal de l'Indre" at Chateauroux:

"ISSOUDUN.

"The religious movement is making progress in le Berry. All the friends of the Church and respectable people in this town collected yesterday to witness a ceremony, by which one of the chief landowners in this part of the country put an end to a scandalous state of affairs dating from a time when religion was a dead letter in these parts. This issue, due to the enlightened zeal of the ecclesiastics of this town, will, we hope, find imitators, and put an end to these discreditable unsanctified unions, begun at the most disastrous period of the Revolutionary misrule.

"One thing is noteworthy in the case of which we write: it was brought about by the urgency of a Colonel of the Imperial Army, quartered in our town by a sentence of the Supreme Court, who, by this marriage, may forfeit his uncle's fortune. Such disinterestedness is rare enough in our day to deserve to be made public."

Under the contract Rouget settled on Flore a sum of a hundred thousand francs, and an annuity in case of widowhood of thirty thousand francs. After the wedding, which was splendid, Agathe went back to Paris, the happiest of mothers, and there gave to Joseph and Desroches what she called the good news.

"Your son is much too deep not to lay hands on her inheritance," replied the attorney, when he had heard Madame Bridau out. "And you and your poor Joseph will never have a farthing of your brother's fortune."

"You will always be the same—you and Joseph—always unjust to that poor boy," said his mother. "His conduct before the Court was that of a great politician. He succeeded in saving a great many heads!—Philippe's errors are the outcome of want of occupation; his great powers lie idle; but he has learned how injurious faults of conduct must be to a man who wants to rise in the world, and he has ambition, I am sure; nor am I the only person who believes in his future. Monsieur Hochon is firmly convinced that Philippe has a high destiny."

"Oh, yes," said Desroches, "if he chooses to apply his utterly perverse intelligence to making a fortune he will succeed, for he is capable of anything, and men of that stamp get on fast."

"And why should he not succeed by honest means?" said Madame Bridau.

"You will see," answered Desroches. "Lucky or unlucky, Philippe will always be the man of the Rue Mazarine, the murderer of Madame Descoings, the household thief. But be easy; he will seem perfectly honest in the eyes of the world."

On the day after the marriage, Philippe took Madame Rouget by the arm, when his uncle had gone upstairs to dress, for the couple had come down to breakfast, Flore in a wrapper, and the old man in his dressing-gown.

"Aunt-in-law," said he, leading her into a window recess, "you are now a member of the family. Thanks to me, the lawyers have taken care of you. Now come! no nonsense. I mean to play the game with the cards on the table. I know all the tricks you could play me, and I shall keep a sharper eye on you than any duenna. As to what goes on in the house, I shall sit there, by Heaven! like a spider in the middle of its web.—Now, this will show you that while you were

in bed, unable to move hand or foot, I could have had you turned out of doors without a sou. Read this."

And he held out to Flore the following letter:

"My dear Boy—Florentine, who has at last come out at the Opera, in the new house, in a *pas de trois* with Mariette and Tullia, has never forgotten you, any more than Florine, who has finally thrown over Lousteau and taken up with Nathan. These two sly-boots have found you the sweetest creature in the world, a child of seventeen, as pretty as an English girl, as prim as a lady at her tricks, as cunning as Desroches, as trustworthy as Godeschal; and Mariette has rigged her out, and wishes you good luck. There is no woman living who could hold her own against this angel, concealing a demon; she will be able to play any part, to get round your uncle, and make him crazy with love. She has the heavenly expression that poor Coralie had; she can cry, she has a voice that would extract a thousand-franc note from a heart of the hardest granite, and the hussy swigs down champagne with the best of us. She is a jewel of a girl; she is under obligations to Mariette, and is anxious to make some return. After gulping down the fortunes of two Englishmen, one Russian, and a Roman prince, Mademoiselle Esther is just now in very low water. If you give her ten thousand francs, she will be content. She said just now, 'Well, I have never had a citizen to wheedle; it will be practice for me!' Finot knows her well, Bixiou, des Lupeaulx, all our set, in fact. If there were any fortunes left in France, she would be the most famous courtesan of modern times.

"My style smacks of Nathan, Bixiou, and Finot, who are playing the fool with the above-named Esther, in the most splendid rooms you can imagine, which have just been arranged *à la Florine* by old Lord Dudley, Marsay's real father, whom the clever little actress has quite bowled over, thanks to the costume of her new part. Tullia is still with the Duc de Rhétoré, Mariette with the Duc de Maufrigneuse, so they between them can get you a ticket-of-leave on the

King's fête day. Try to have your uncle safe under the daisies by next Saint-Louis' Day, come back with the fortune, and spend some of it with Esther and your old friends, who sign in a body to remind you of their existence.

"NATHAN, FLORINE, BIXIOU, FINOT, MARIETTE,
"FLORENTINE, GIROUDEAU, TULLIA."

This letter quivered in Madame Rouget's hands in a way that betrayed her agitation of mind and body. The aunt dared not look at the nephew, who fixed on her a pair of eyes full of terrible expression.

"I have full confidence in you," said he. "You see that I have; but I must have something in return. I made you my aunt in order to marry you some day. You are worth quite as much as Esther to my uncle. A year hence we must go to Paris, the only place where beauty can live. You will enjoy yourself rather more than you do here, for it is a perpetual carnival. I shall rejoin the army and be made a general, and you will be a great lady. That is your future; work it out.—But I must have a pledge of our alliance. Within one month you must procure for me my uncle's power of attorney under the pretext of relieving you and him alike of the cares of money. One month after I must have a special power to transfer his stock. When once the securities are in my name, we shall have an equal interest in marrying each other some day. All that, my fair aunt, is plain and precise. There must be no ambiguity between you and me. I may marry my aunt-in-law after a year's widowhood, whereas I could not marry a disreputable nobody."

He left the room without awaiting her answer. When, an hour later, Védie came in to clear away the breakfast, she found her mistress pale and in a perspiration in spite of the cool season. Flore was feeling like a woman who has fallen to the bottom of a precipice; she saw nothing before her but blackness, and on that blackness, as in some dark beyond, flitted monstrous things, indistinctly seen, and filling her with terror. She felt the damp chill of these caverns. She

was instinctively afraid of this man, and nevertheless a voice cried to her that she deserved to have him for her master. She could not struggle against fate; Flore Brazier, for decency's sake, had rooms in Père Rouget's house, but Madame Rouget belonged to her husband, and so was bereft of the inestimable independence that a housekeeper-mistress preserves.

In this dreadful position she hoped she might have a child; but in the last five years Jean-Jacques had become absolutely decrepit. This marriage was to the poor old man what Louis XII.'s second marriage was to him. Again, the constant watchfulness of such a man as Philippe, who had nothing to do, for he gave up his employment, made any kind of vengeance impossible. Benjamin was an innocent but devoted spy. La Védie quaked in Philippe's presence. Flore was alone and helpless. To crown all, she was afraid of death; without knowing how Philippe could make away with her, she guessed that the suspicion of a coming heir would be her death-warrant; the sound of that voice, the covert flash of that gambler's eye, the soldier's slightest movement—treating her as he did with the politest brutality—made her shudder. As to the power of attorney demanded by the ferocious Colonel, who was a hero in the eyes of Issoudun, he had it as soon as he asked for it; for Flore fell under his dominion as France had fallen under that of Napoleon.

Rouget meanwhile, like a moth whose feet are caught in the burning wax of a taper, was fast wasting his remaining strength; and his nephew, looking on at this lingering death, was as unmoved as the diplomatists who, in 1814, watched the convulsions of Imperial France.

Philippe, who had no belief in Napoleon II., then wrote the following letter to the War Minister, and Mariette got it delivered by the Duc de Maufrigneuse:

"MONSEIGNEUR—Napoleon no longer lives. I remained faithful to him after taking the oath; but now I am at liberty to offer my services to His Majesty. If your Excellency

would condescend to explain my conduct to His Majesty, the King will understand that it has conformed to the laws of honor, if not to those of the realm. The King, who thought it but natural that his aide-de-camp, General Rapp, should mourn for his former master, will no doubt be equally indulgent to me. Napoleon was my benefactor.

"I therefore entreat your Excellency to take into consideration my request for employment with my full rank, assuring you of my entire submission. This will show you, Monseigneur, that the King will find me the most faithful of his subjects.

"Accept, I beg, the expression of respect with which I have the honor to remain

"Your Excellency's

"Most obedient and most humble servant,

"PHILIPPE BRIDAU.

"Formerly Major of Brigade in the Dragoon Guards; Officer of the Legion of Honor, under surveillance of the State Police at Issoudun."

With this letter was a request for permission to visit Paris on urgent private affairs, supported by Mouilleron, who annexed letters from the Maire, the Sous-préfet, and the Superintendent of Police at Issoudun, who all spoke in praise of Philippe, and dwelt on the article written on the occasion of his uncle's marriage.

A fortnight later, at the time when the picture exhibition was opened, Philippe received the permit he had asked for, and a letter, in which the War Minister informed him that, by the King's orders, he was, as a first favor, reinstated on the Army List as Lieutenant-Colonel.

Philippe moved to Paris with his aunt and old Rouget, whom he carried off to the Treasury three days after their arrival to sign the transfer of the State bond, which thus became his own property. The feeble old man and la Rabouilleuse were flung by their nephew into frantic dissipa-

tions and the dangerous company of indefatigable actresses, journalists, artists, and women of equivocal character, among whom Philippe had spent his youth, and where old Rouget found Rabouilleuses enough to be the death of him. Giroudeau undertook that Père Rouget should die the happy death made famous since, it is said, by a Marshal of France. Lolotte, one of the handsomest "walking ladies" at the Opera, was Rouget's bewitching assassin. The old man died after a splendid supper given by Florentine; and whether the supper or Mademoiselle Lolotte finished off the old provincial, it is difficult to decide. Lolotte ascribed his death to a slice of *pâté de foie gras;* and as the Strasburg pie could make no rejoinder, it is taken as proved that the good man died of indigestion.

Madame Rouget found herself in her element in this excessively free-and-easy society; but Philippe gave her Mariette for a chaperon, and she did not allow the widow to play the fool, though her mourning was lightened by some flirtations.

In October, 1823, Philippe, armed with a power of attorney from his aunt, returned to Issoudun to wind up his uncle's estate, a business quickly accomplished, for in March, 1824, he was in Paris with sixteen hundred thousand francs, the net value in hard cash of his deceased uncle's estate, not inclusive of the valuable pictures, which had never been moved from old Hochon's keeping. Philippe banked his money with Mongenod & Son, the house in which young Baruch Borniche had found a berth, and of whose solvency and honesty old Hochon had given a satisfactory report. This firm took the sixteen hundred thousand francs at six per cent per annum, on condition of three months' notice being given previous to withdrawal of the capital.

One fine day Philippe went to request his mother's presence at his marriage, the witnesses being Giroudeau, Finot, Nathan, and Bixiou. By the marriage contract Madame Rouget, widow, settled all her possessions on her husband in the event of her dying childless. There were no letters

of formal announcement, no party, no display, for Philippe had his own schemes; he took rooms for his wife in the Rue Saint-Georges, an apartment sold ready furnished by Lolotte, which Madame Bridau the younger thought delightful, but where her husband rarely set foot.

Without letting anybody know what he was doing, Philippe purchased for two hundred and fifty thousand francs a house in the Rue de Clichy, at a time when no one suspected the value which property in that part of the town would attain—a magnificent mansion, for which he paid fifty thousand crowns down, the rest to be paid off in two years. He spent enormous sums on the interior and in furnishing it, devoting to this his whole income for two years. The splendid pictures, cleaned and restored, and valued at three hundred thousand francs, were displayed to full advantage.

The accession of Charles X. had raised to greater favor than ever the Duc de Chaulieu's family; and his eldest son, the Duc de Rhétoré, often met Philippe at Tullia's. In the person of Charles X. the elder branch of the Bourbons supposed itself to be definitely seated on the throne, and it followed the advice given at an earlier time by Marshal Gouvion Saint-Cyr to secure the attachment of the soldiers of the Empire. Philippe, who, no doubt, gave valuable information as to the conspiracies of 1820 and 1822, was appointed Lieutenant-Colonel in the Duc de Maufrigneuse's regiment. This delightful grand gentleman felt himself under an obligation to help the man whom he had robbed of Mariette. The *corps de ballet* were not without some knowledge of this promotion.

It had, moreover, been decided by the wisdom of Charles X.'s privy council that His Royal Highness the Dauphin should assume a slight tinge of Liberalism. Hence the great Philippe, now the satellite of the Duc de Maufrigneuse, was presented not only to the Dauphin, but also to the Dauphiness, who was not ill disposed toward blunt manners and military men with a character for fidelity. Philippe quite appreciated the Dauphin's part, and he took advantage of the

first performance of this assumed Liberalism to get himself appointed aide-de-camp to a marshal in favor at Court.

In January, 1827, Philippe, transferred to the King's Bodyguard as Lieutenant-Colonel of the regiment to which the Duc de Maufrigneuse had been appointed, solicited the honor of being allowed to assume a title. Under the Restoration ennoblement became almost a right of the commoners who were promoted to the Guards. Colonel Bridau, having just bought the estate of Brambourg, craved permission to entail the property with the title of Count. This favor he obtained by taking advantage of his connections in the highest circle, appearing with a gorgeous display of carriages and liveries, in short, with the air and style of a lord.

No sooner did Philippe, Lieutenant-Colonel of the most dashing cavalry regiment of the Guards, see his name in the Army List as Comte de Brambourg than he took to hanging about the house of Lieutenant-General the Comte de Soulanges, and paying attention to his younger daughter, Mademoiselle Amélie de Soulanges. The insatiable Philippe, supported by the mistresses of the most influential men, next craved the honor of being made aide-de-camp to Monseigneur the Dauphin. He had the audacity to say to the Dauphiness that "an old officer, wounded in many a battle and familiar with war on a grand scale, might on occasion be of use to His Royal Highness."

Philippe, who could take the tone of any servility, was, in these high circles, exactly what he ought to be, just as he had been a second Mignonnet at Issoudun. He lived in the greatest style, gave splendid entertainments and dinners, admitting to his house none of his old friends whose position might compromise his prospects. Thus he was pitiless to the companions of his debaucheries. He refused point-blank when Bixiou asked him to speak a word in favor of Giroudeau, who wished to rejoin the service when Florentine threw him over.

"He cannot behave himself," said Philippe.

"So that was what he said of me!" cried Giroudeau. "And I relieved him of his uncle!"

"We will serve him out," said Bixiou.

Philippe wanted to marry Mademoiselle Amélie de Soulanges, to be made a general, and to have the command of a regiment of the Bodyguard. He asked for so much that, to keep him quiet, he was made Commander of the Legion of Honor, and of the Order of Saint-Louis.

One evening Agathe and Joseph, walking homeward in the rain, saw Philippe drive past in uniform, covered with Orders; he was lounging in a corner of his handsome *coupé*, lined with yellow silk, and with a coat-of-arms on the panel surmounted by a Count's coronet, on his way to an entertainment at the Elysée-Bourbon; he splashed his mother and brother, recognizing them with a patronizing nod.

"He is going it; he is going it! the old rogue!" said Joseph to his mother. "At the same time he might send us something better than the mud in our faces."

"He is in such a splendid position, so far above us, that we must not owe him a grudge if he forgets us," said Madame Bridau. "To climb so steep a hill, he must have so many obligations to fulfil, so many sacrifices to make, that he may well be unable to come to see us even while thinking of us."

"My dear fellow," said the Duc de Maufrigneuse one evening to the new Comte de Brambourg, "I am sure that your proposal will be taken in good part; but to marry Mademoiselle Amélie de Soulanges you must be a free man. What have you done with your wife?"

"My wife?" said Philippe, with a gesture, a look, an accent such as Frédérick Lemaître afterward conceived of in one of his most terrible parts. "Alas! I have the melancholy certainty of losing her. She has not a week to live. Ah! my dear Duke, you do not know what it is to have married beneath you! A woman who had been a cook, who has the tastes of a cook, and who brings dis-

honor on me—I am much to be pitied. But I have had the honor of explaining the situation to Madame the Dauphiness; the necessity arose some time since for saving a million of francs, which my uncle had left by will to this creature. Happily, my wife has taken to drams; at her death I become the possessor of a million in the hands of Messrs. Mongenod; I have more than thirty thousand francs in the five per cents; and my estate—entailed—which brings in forty thousand francs a year. If, as everything leads us to suppose, Monsieur de Soulanges receives a Marshal's bâton, I, with the title of Comte de Brambourg, am in a position to become general and a peer of France. It will be a fitting retirement for an aide-de-camp to the Dauphin."

After the Salon of 1828 the painter to the King, one of the kindest-hearted men of his day, had obtained for Joseph's mother a lottery-ticket office in the neighborhood of the Halle. Subsequently Agathe was fortunate enough to be able to exchange, without paying any premium, with the holder of a similar office in the Rue de Seine, in a house where Joseph took a studio. The widow now, in her turn, employed a clerk, and cost her son nothing. Still, in 1828, though at the head of a very good lottery-office, which she owed to Joseph's fame, Madame Bridau did not yet believe in his glory—which, indeed, was hotly disputed, as all true glory is. The great painter, always struggling with his passions, wanted much; he could not earn enough to keep up the luxury required by his position in society, and by his distinguished eminence in the younger school. Though he had warm adherents in his friends of the Art Society, and in Mademoiselle des Touches, he did not appeal to the Philistine. This Creature, in whose hands the money lies nowadays, never loosens his purse-strings for talent that can be questioned; and Joseph saw the classicists and the Institute arrayed against him, with critics who waited on these two powers Besides, the Comte de Brambourg af-

fected amazement when any one spoke to him of Joseph. So the courageous artist, though upheld by Gros and Gérard, who secured him the Cross during the Salon of 1827, had few commissions. If the Minister of the Interior and the Royal Establishments were little inclined to purchase his large pictures, the dealers and wealthy foreigners still less cared to be burdened with them. Besides, as we know, Joseph allows himself to be rather too much led away by fancy, and the result is an inequality of work, of which his enemies take advantage to dispute his talent.

"Painting on the heroic scale is in a bad way," said his friend Pierre Grassou, as he turned out daubs to the taste of the Philistines, whose rooms were ill suited to large canvases.

"What you want is a cathedral to decorate," Schinner would say, "then you would reduce criticism to silence by some great work."

All these speeches, which frightened good Agathe, confirmed her first opinion of Joseph and Philippe. Facts were on the side of the woman, who was still so entirely provincial; was not Philippe, her favorite child, at last the great man of the family? She looked on the sins of the boy's youth as the aberrations of genius. Joseph, whose efforts left her unmoved—for she saw too much of them in their early state to admire them when finished—seemed to her no further forward in 1828 than in 1816. Poor Joseph owed money; he was crushed under the weight of debt; he had taken up a thankless calling that brought no returns. In short, Agathe could not imagine why an Order should have been bestowed on Joseph.

Philippe, with strength enough never to go to the gaming table, and invited to *Madame's* entertainments, the splendid Colonel, who at reviews and in processions rode past in a gorgeous uniform, gaudy with two red ribbons, realized Agathe's maternal dreams. One day at a public ceremonial Philippe had wiped out the odious picture of his poverty on the Quai de l'École, by passing his mother on the same spot,

preceding the Dauphin, with his aigrette, and his shako, and his pelisse splendid with gold-lace and fur. While to the artist she had become a sort of devoted Gray Sister, Agathe no longer felt herself a mother excepting to the dashing aide-de-camp to His Royal Highness Monseigneur the Dauphin. In her pride of Philippe she could have believed that she owed her easier means to him, forgetting that the lottery office had come to her through Joseph.

One day Agathe saw her poor artist so much worried by the heavy total of his colorman's bill, that, while cursing the arts, she longed to release him from his debts. The poor woman, who kept house on the proceeds of her lottery tickets, took good care never to ask Joseph for a farthing. Thus, she had no money; but she trusted to Philippe's kind heart and purse. For three years, from day to day, she had expected a visit from her son; she pictured him bringing her an enormous sum, and rejoiced in advance over the delight of giving it to Joseph, whose opinion of Philippe remained unchanged, as did that of Desroches.

So, without Joseph's knowledge, she wrote to Philippe the following letter:

"*To Monsieur le Comte de Brambourg:*

"My dear Philippe—For five years you have never given your mother the smallest thought. That is not kind. You ought to remember the past, if only for the sake of your excellent brother. Joseph now is in need of money, while you are swimming in opulence; he works, while you rush from party to party. You possess the whole of my brother's fortune. In short, from what little Borniche tells me, you have two hundred thousand francs a year. Well, then, come and see Joseph. In the course of your visit leave in the death's-head a score of thousand-franc notes. You owe us that much, Philippe; your brother will nevertheless feel himself much obliged to you, to say nothing of the pleasure you will give your mother.

"Agathe Bridau *née* Rouget."

Two days after the maid brought up to the studio, where poor Agathe had just breakfasted with Joseph, the following dreadful note:

"MY DEAR MOTHER—I cannot marry Mademoiselle Amélie de Soulanges with a handful of walnut shells, when behind the name of Comte de Brambourg there lies that of your son, PHILIPPE BRIDAU."

As she sank almost fainting on the studio sofa, Agathe dropped the letter. The slight rustle of the paper as it fell, and Agathe's low but terrible cry, startled Joseph, who was painting away vehemently on a sketch. He looked round the edge of his canvas to see what was happening. Seeing his mother lying there, the painter put down his palette and brushes, and flew to raise her, almost a corpse. He took Agathe in his arms, carried her on to the bed in her room, and sent the maid to fetch his friend Bianchon. As soon as Joseph could question his mother, she confessed her letter to Philippe and his reply to her. The artist went to pick up the note, of which the concise brutality had broken the frail heart of the poor mother by overturning the towering edifice raised by her maternal preference.

Joseph came back to his mother's bedside, and had the wit to be silent. He never mentioned his brother during the three weeks while his poor mother lay, not ill indeed, but dying. Indeed, Bianchon, who came every day and attended the poor woman with the devotion of a true friend, told Joseph the truth on the first day.

"At her age," said he, "and in the position in which your mother will find herself, we must only try to make death as easy to her as possible."

Agathe, indeed, felt herself so surely called to God, that on the very next day she begged the religious care of old Abbé Loraux, her spiritual director for two-and-twenty years. As soon as she was alone with him, after pouring all her sorrow into his heart, she repeated what she had

said to her godmother, what she was constantly saying—"How have I angered God? Do I not love Him with all my soul? Have I not walked in the way of salvation? What is my sin? And if I am so guilty of an error I am unconscious of, have I time now to repair it?"

"No," said the old man in a mild voice. "Alas! your life seems blameless, and your soul unspotted; but God's eye, poor suffering woman, is more penetrating than that of His ministers. I myself see clearly now, but too late—for you have blinded me till now."

As she heard this speech, uttered by lips from which hitherto no words but those of peace and honey had fallen for her, Agathe sat up in bed, with wide eyes full of terror and distress.

"Speak, speak!" she cried.

"Be comforted," said the old priest. "From the manner of your punishment you may look for forgiveness. God is severe in this world only on His chosen few. Woe unto those whose misdeeds find favoring chances; they will be kneaded again in human form till they in their turn are sternly punished for mere mistakes and ripen into food for heaven. Your life, my daughter, has been one long mistake. You fell into the pit you dug for yourself, for we always fail on the side we ourselves have weakened. You gave all your heart to a wretch in whom you saw your glory, and you have misprized the child who is your true glory. Your injustice has been so deep that you have not observed this striking contrast; your means of living even have come to you from Joseph, while your other son has constantly plundered you. Your poorer son, who loves you without the reward of equal tenderness, gives you your daily bread; while the rich man, who has never cared for you, and who scorns you, longs for your death."

"Oh! for that matter—" she put in.

"Yes," the priest went on, "your humble condition interferes with the schemes of his pride.—As a mother, this is your crime! As a woman, your sufferings and sorrows prom-

ise you the joy and peace of the Lord. Your son Joseph is so noble that his affection has never been diminished by the injustice of your favoritism; love him as he deserves. Give him your whole heart during these last days. And pray for him—I will go and pray for you."

The mother's eyes, unsealed by so firm a hand, looked back with a retrospective glance on the whole of her past life. Enlightened by this sudden flash, she perceived the involuntary wrong she had done, and melted into tears. The old priest was so much moved by the spectacle of an erring and repentant creature, sinning solely by ignorance, that he left the room not to betray his compassion.

About two hours after the confessor's departure, Joseph came into his mother's room. He had been to a friend to borrow the necessary money to pay his most pressing debts, and he crept in on tiptoe, believing that his mother was asleep. He then sat down in an armchair, without being seen by the sick woman.

A sob, broken by the words, "Will he ever forgive me?" made Joseph start up with the cold perspiration down his back, for he thought his mother was in the delirium that precedes death.

"What is the matter, mother?" he cried, terrified to see her eyes red with weeping and her woe-stricken face.

"Oh, Joseph! can you forgive me, my child?" cried she.

"What do you mean?" asked the artist.

"I have not loved you as you deserved—"

"What a preposterous idea!" cried he. "You have not loved me—? Have we not lived together these seven years? Have you not kept house for me for seven years? Do I not see you every day? Do I not hear your voice? Are you not the gentle and indulgent sharer of my poverty?—You do not understand painting! Well, but that is not to be taught. And only yesterday I was saying to Grassou, 'The thing that comforts me in all my struggles is that I have such a good mother; she is just what an artist's wife ought to be;

she takes care of everything; she looks after all my creature comforts without making any fuss—' "

"No, Joseph, no. You have loved me, and I have never returned you tenderness for tenderness. Oh! how I wish I might live! . . . Give me your hand."

Agathe took her son's hand, kissed and held it to her heart, gazing at him for a long time, her blue eyes radiant with the affection she had hitherto always kept for Philippe. The painter, who had studied expression, was so struck by the change, and saw so plainly that his mother's heart had opened to him, that he put his arms round her and held her clasped for some seconds, saying like a crazy creature, "Oh, mother, mother!"

"Ah, I feel I am forgiven!" said she. "God must surely ratify a son's forgiveness of his mother."

"You must keep calm; do not worry yourself. It is all over now. I feel that I am enough loved at this moment for all the past," cried Joseph, laying his mother gently on the pillows.

During a fortnight, while life and death were contending for the saintly creature, she had for Joseph such looks, such impulses of soul and expressions of gesture, as revealed love so perfect that a whole life seemed contained in each outburst. The mother now thought only of her son; she counted herself as nothing, and, upheld by love, no longer felt her sufferings. She made artless speeches like a child's. D'Arthez, Michel Chrestien, Fulgence Ridal, Pierre Grassou, and Bianchon came to keep Joseph company, and often held discussions in an undertone in the sick woman's room.

"Oh! how I wish I knew what was meant by color!" she exclaimed one evening when she heard them talking about a picture.

Joseph's conduct on his part was sublime toward his mother; he scarcely left her room; he cherished Agathe in his heart; he responded to her tenderness with equal tenderness. It was to the painter's friends one of those beautiful spectacles which can never be forgotten. These men, who

all were examples of the union of real talent and noble character, were for Joseph and his mother all that they ought to be—angels who prayed with him and wept with him—not that they said prayers or shed tears, but they were one with him in thought and act. Joseph, an artist as noble in feeling as in gifts, read in certain of his mother's looks a longing hidden deep in her heart; and he said one day to d'Arthez, "She was too fond of that robber Philippe not to want to see him again before she dies . . ."

Joseph requested Bixiou, who was a figure in the bohemian world which Philippe would occasionally frequent, to make that infamous parvenu promise to assume, out of pity, some show of affection, so as to wrap the poor mother's heart in a shroud graced by illusion. Bixiou, as a student of human nature, a misanthropic scoffer, was ready and willing to undertake such a mission. When he had explained Agathe's situation to the Comte de Brambourg, who received him in a bedroom hung with yellow silk damask, the Colonel burst out laughing.

"What the devil do you want me to do there?" cried he. "The only service the good woman can do me is to kick the bucket as soon as possible, for she would cut a bad figure at my wedding with Mademoiselle de Soulanges. The less family I have to show, the better for me! As you may well suppose, I only wish I could bury the name of Bridau under all the tombstones in Père-Lachaise.

"My brother ruins me by proclaiming my real name to the world. But you, at any rate, are too clever not to understand my position. Come, now—if you were to be elected deputy, you have a ready tongue of your own; you would be as much feared as Chauvelin, and you might be made Comte Bixiou, Director of the Beaux Arts. If you had achieved that, and if your grandmother Descoings were still alive, how would you like to have that good woman at your elbow—a woman like Madame Saint-Léon? Would you offer her your arm in the Tuileries? Would you introduce her to the noble family you might seek to enter? By Heaven! I

tell you, you would wish her six feet under ground, packed in a wrapper of lead.—Come, breakfast with me, and we will talk of something else. I am a parvenu, my dear fellow, and I know it. I do not mean to display my baby-clothes! —My son, now, will be luckier than I; he will be a fine gentleman. The rascal will wish me dead, and I quite expect it, or he will be no son of mine."

He rang the bell; a footman came in, to whom he said:

"My friend will breakfast with me. Send up something elegant."

"But the fashionable world would not see you in your mother's room," retorted Bixiou. "What would it cost you to pretend to love the poor woman for a few hours?"

"All my eye!" said Philippe, with a wink. "They have sent you. I am an old bird, and not to be caught with chaff. My mother wants to conjure me with her last breath to fork out something for Joseph! Thank you for nothing."

When Bixiou repeated this scene to Joseph, the poor painter felt chilled to the very soul.

"Does Philippe know that I am ill?" said Agathe in a lamentable voice the evening of the very day when Bixiou had given an account of his errand.

Joseph left the room choked with tears. The Abbé Loraux, who was at the patient's side, took her hand and pressed it as he replied, "Alas! my child, you have never had but one son."

On hearing these words, which she understood, Agathe had an attack that was the beginning of the end. She died twenty hours after. In the wanderings of her mind before death the words escaped her, "Who does Philippe take after?"

Joseph alone followed his mother to the grave. Philippe had gone to Orleans on regimental business, scared from Paris by the following letter, addressed to him by Joseph as their mother breathed her last:

"WRETCH—My poor mother is dead of the shock your letter caused. Put on mourning. But pretend to be ill; I

will not have her murderer to stand at my side by her coffin. "JOSEPH B."

The painter, who had lost all heart for his painting, though his deep grief perhaps needed the sort of mechanical diversion that work brings with it, was surrounded by friends, who agreed among themselves not to leave him to solitude. Thus Bixiou, who loved Joseph as truly as a scoffer can love any one, was one of a group of friends in Joseph's studio one day, a fortnight after the funeral. At this moment the maid bustled in, and handed to Joseph a letter, brought, as she said, by an old woman who would wait for the answer in the porter's lodge:

"MONSIEUR—Whom I do not venture to call my brother, I must apply to you, were it only by reason of the name I bear—"

Joseph turned the page, and looked at the signature at the end. These words, "Comtesse Flore de Brambourg," made his blood run chill, for he foresaw some fresh abomination of his brother's doing.

"That wretch," said he, "would outdevil the devil! And *that* is a man of honor—*that* can hang a peck of tinsel on its breast—*that* spreads its tail at Court instead of being flogged at the cart's tail!—And this precious scoundrel is Monsieur le Comte!"

"There are many like him," said Bixiou.

"And besides that, this Rabouilleuse deserves nothing from me," Joseph went on. "She is not worth a curse; she would have left me to have my head chopped off like a fowl without ever saying, 'He is innocent.' "

As Joseph tossed away the letter, Bixiou nimbly caught it, and read it aloud:

"—Is it becoming that Madame la Comtesse de Brambourg, whatever her faults may be, should be sent to die in a hospital? If that is to be my fate, if that is the Count's

wish and yours, so be it; but then, as you are a friend of Doctor Bianchon's, get his introduction to get me into a hospital. The woman who takes you this letter, Monsieur, has been eleven days running to the Hôtel de Brambourg in the Rue de Clichy without being able to obtain any help from my husband. The state in which I am prevents my employing an attorney so as to obtain by law what is due to me and to die in peace. Indeed, nothing can save me; I know it. So if you will positively have nothing to say to your unhappy sister-in-law, give me money enough to enable me to put an end to my days; for your brother, I see, wishes my death, and always has wished it. Though he told me he knew three certain ways of killing a woman, I had not the wit to foresee the means he has taken.

"If so be you should honor me with a little assistance, and judge for yourself of the misery I am in, I am living in the Rue du Houssay, at the corner of the Rue Chantereine, on the fifth floor. If I do not pay my arrears of rent to-morrow, I must turn out. And where am I to go, Monsieur? May I sign myself,

"Your sister-in-law,

"Comtesse Flore de Brambourg."

"What a foul pit of infamy!" said Joseph. "What is there behind it?"

"Have the woman up first; that will be a worthy preface to the story no doubt," said Bixiou.

A minute after there appeared on the scene a woman whom Bixiou described as walking rags. She was, in fact, a mass of clothes and old gowns, one over another, bordered with mud from the weather, the whole mounted on thick legs and splay feet, with patched stockings and shoes, from which the water oozed through many cracks. To crown this mass of rubbish was such a head as Charlet has given to his sweepers, helmeted with a hideous bandanna, worn threadbare even in the creases.

"What is your name?" asked Joseph, while Bixiou

sketched the woman as she stood, leaning on an umbrella of the year II. of the Republic.

"Madame Gruget, at your service. I have drawed my dividends in my day, my little gentleman," said she to Bixiou, whose covert smile offended her. "If my pore girl hadn't been so unlucky as to be too fond of a man, I shouldn't look so as you see me. She made a hole in the water, saving your presence, my pore Ida. And then I was fool enough to go in for lottery tickets, four numbers, and sticking to them, and that is why at seventy years old, my good Monsieur, I am sick-nurse at ten sous a day and my food—"

"But not your clothes," said Bixiou. "My grandmother dressed herself, besides keeping up a snug little ternion."

"But out of my ten sous I have to pay for a furnished room . . ."

"And what has she got—this lady you are nursing?"

"She has got nothing, Monsieur, by way of money I mean; for she has got some complaint that frightens the doctors.—She owes me sixty days' pay, and that is why I stay with her. Her husband, who is a Count—for she is a Countess—will pay the bill, no doubt, when she is dead, and counting on that, I have loaned her all I had . . . But I have nothing left, and I have put everything up the spout. She owes me forty-seven francs and twelve sous, besides the thirty francs wages, and as she wants to choke herself off with charcoal; 'That is not right,' says I—more by token I told the woman in the lodge to keep an eye on her while I was out, for she is capable of throwing herself out of window."

"But what is the matter with her?" said Joseph.

"Well, sir, the doctor came from the Sisters; but as to what is the matter," said Madame Gruget, with a prudish air—"he said she must go to the hospital—and she wouldn't get over it."

"We will go and see about it," said Bixiou.

"Here," said Joseph, "here are ten francs."

After putting his hand into the famous death's-head and taking out all his change, the painter walked to the Rue Mazarine, where he took a hackney cab and went off to Bianchon, whom he fortunately found at home, while Bixiou set out for the Rue de Bussy to fetch their friend Desroches. The four friends met an hour after in the Rue du Houssay.

"That Mephistopheles on horseback called Philippe Bridau," said Bixiou to his three friends as they climbed the stairs, "has steered his bark in a cunning way to get rid of his wife. Our friend Lousteau, as you know, only too glad to get a thousand-franc note every month from Philippe, kept Madame Bridau in the company of Florine, Mariette, Tullia, and la Val-Noble. As soon as Philippe saw his Rabouilleuse accustomed to dress and expensive pleasures, he gave her no more money, but left her to make it—you may imagine how. Thus by the end of eighteen months Philippe left his wife to sink a little lower, from quarter to quarter; and at last, by the help of a splendid young subaltern, he suggested to her a taste for dram-drinking. As he rose his wife sank, and the Countess is now in the kennel. The woman born in the fields is hard to kill; I do not know how Philippe set to work to get rid of her. I am curious to study this little drama, for I owe the fellow a revenge. Alas! my friends," Bixiou went on, in a tone that left his three companions doubtful whether he spoke in joke or in earnest, "to get rid of a man you have only to inoculate him with a vice.

"'She loved balls too well and that was her death,' said Victor Hugo. There you are. My grandmother loved lottery gambling; Père Rouget loved a petticoat, and Lolotte was the death of him! Madame Bridau, poor creature, loved Philippe, and by Philippe she has perished. Oh, Vice! Vice! —My friends, do you know what vice is? It is the Bonneau of death."

"Then you will die of a jest!" said Desroches, smiling at Bixiou.

Above the fourth floor the young men mounted one of

those upright stairways like ladders which lead up to the attics of many houses in Paris. Though Joseph, who had seen Flore so handsome, was prepared for a dreadful contrast, he could not conceive of the hideous spectacle that presented itself to his artistic gaze. Under the sharp slope of a garret, with no paper on the walls, and on a camp-bed with a meagre mattress stuffed perhaps with flock, the four men saw a woman as green as a body two days drowned, and as emaciated as a consumptive patient within two hours of death. This malodorous carcass wore a common checked handkerchief bound round a head bereft of hair. The caverns of her hollow eyes were red, and the lids like the skin that lines an egg-shell. As to the form that had once been so beautiful, it was a squalid skeleton.

On seeing her visitors, Flore drew across her bosom a rag of muslin that had probably been a window-blind, for it was edged with rust from the iron rod. The furniture consisted of two chairs, a wretched chest of drawers, on which a tallow candle was set in a potato, some dishes strewn on the floor, and an earthen fire-pot in the corner of an otherwise empty hearth. Bixiou saw the remains of the half-quire of paper purchased at the grocer's for the letter which the two women had no doubt concocted between them. The word loathsome is but a positive degree for which there is no superlative to express the effect produced by this abject scene.

When the dying woman saw Joseph, two large tears fell down her cheeks.

"She can still weep," said Bixiou. "A strange sight indeed—tears flowing from a bag of dominoes. It explains Moses' miracle."

"Is not she dried up!" cried Joseph.

"By the fires of repentance," said Flore. "I can have no priest, I have nothing, not even a crucifix to see the Image of God. Oh! Monsieur," she went on, uplifting arms like two carved wooden sticks, "I have been very wicked, but God never punished any one as He has punished me! Philippe killed Max, who had bidden me to do horrible things,

and now he is killing me too. God is using him as a scourge for me! Behave yourself well, for we all have our Philippe."

"Leave me alone with her," said Bianchon; "I want to find out if her complaint is curable."

"If she can be cured, Philippe Bridau will be mad with rage," said Desroches. "I will have an affidavit prepared as to the state his wife is in; he has not taken any steps against her for adultery; she has all her conjugal rights; he must face the scandal of a trial. First of all, we will have Madame la Comtesse conveyed to Doctor Dubois' Home for the Sick in the Rue du Faubourg Saint Denis; she will there be nursed in luxury. Then I shall call upon the Count for reinstatement under her husband's roof."

"Bravo, Desroches!" cried Bixiou. "What joy to be able to do good that will hurt so much!"

Ten minutes later Bianchon came down and said to his friends: "I am off at once to Desplein; he can save this woman by an operation. Ah! he will see that she is taken good care of, for the habit of drinking spirits has developed in her a splendid disease that we thought was extinct."

"You wretch of a doctor, get along! As if she had but one disease," said Bixiou.

But Bianchon was already in the courtyard, so great was his haste to go and tell the grand news to Desplein. Two hours later Joseph's unhappy sister-in-law was carried to the private hospital founded by Doctor Dubois, which was subsequently bought by the city of Paris.

Three weeks later the "Hospital Gazette" contained an account of one of the boldest attempts of modern surgery in operating on a patient mentioned under the initials F. B. The subject died, much more of the weakness consequent on prolonged privations than as a result of the operation.

The Comte de Brambourg at once went in deep mourning to call on the Comte de Soulanges, and inform him of the melancholy loss he had sustained. It was whispered in the fashionable world that the Comte de Soulanges was allowing his daughter to marry a *parvenu* of distinguished merit, who

was to be made Maréchal de Camp and Colonel of a regiment of the Bodyguard. De Marsay announced the news to Rastignac, who spoke of it at a supper at the Rocher de Cancale where he met Bixiou.

"That shall never be!" said the cunning artist to himself.

If among the friends Philippe had cut adrift there were some who, like Giroudeau, could not revenge themselves, he had proved himself unwary in offending Bixiou, whose wit secured him a reception everywhere, and who never forgave a slight. Now at the Rocher de Cancale, in the presence of highly respectable persons at supper there, Philippe had replied when Bixiou asked him to invite him to the Hotel de Brambourg, "You may come to my house when you are a minister."

"Must I also become a Protestant to get into your house?" replied Bixiou lightly; but he said to himself, "Though you may be a Goliath, I have a sling, and plenty of stones to fling."

Next day the practical joker dressed at the house of an actor, a friend of his, and was metamorphosed by the omnipotent art of "make-up" into a secularized priest in green spectacles; then he took a fly and drove to the house of the Comte de Soulanges. Bixiou, treated by Philippe as a buffoon, meant to play a trick on him.

Being admitted by the Comte de Soulanges on his urgent plea that he had an important matter to lay before the Count, Bixiou played the part of a venerable personage charged with an important secret. In an assumed voice he related the history of the dead Countess's illness, of which Bianchon had given him the particulars, that of Agathe's death, that of old Rouget's death, of which the Comte de Brambourg had boasted, and that of old Madame Descoings' end; the story of the "loan" from the cash-box of the newspaper, and the facts as to Philippe's general conduct in his worst times.

"Monsieur le Comte, do not give him your daughter till

you have made every inquiry; question his former friends—Bixiou, Captain Giroudeau, and others."

Three months after this the Comte de Brambourg entertained a party at supper: du Tillet, Nucingen, Rastignac, Maxime de Trailles, and de Marsay. The host was taking very easily the half-consolatory speeches made to him by guests concerning his rupture with the house of Soulanges.

"You can do better," said Maxime.

"What fortune would be expected to qualify a man to marry a demoiselle de Grandlieu?" asked Philippe of de Marsay.

"To qualify you?—They would not let you have the ugliest of the six for less than ten million francs," replied de Marsay insolently.

"Pooh!" said Rastignac; "but with two hundred thousand francs a year you may have Mademoiselle de Langeais, the Marquis's daughter; she is ugly, she is thirty, and has not a sou of her own. That ought to satisfy you."

"I shall have ten millions within two years' time," replied Philippe Bridau.

"It is January 16, 1829," cried du Tillet, smiling. "I have been working for ten years, and I have not so much, not I!"

"We will advise each other, and you will see how I manage money matters."

"Why, how much have you altogether?" asked Nucingen.

"If I sold my securities and everything, excepting my estate and this house, which I could not and will not risk, as they are secured by entail, I could certainly handle three millions."

Nucingen and du Tillet looked at each other; then after this keen flash, du Tillet said to Philippe:

"My dear Count, we will work in partnership if you like."

De Marsay caught the glance that du Tillet had shot at Nucingen, and which said, "Those millions are ours!"

In fact, these two great financiers were at the very centre

of political affairs, enabling them to gamble on the Bourse at a given date and with absolute certainty, against Philippe, when the chances would seem to him to be in his favor, while in reality they were in theirs.

The chance came. In July, 1830, du Tillet and Nucingen had enabled the Comte de Brambourg to make fifteen hundred thousand francs; he no longer distrusted them, and thought their advice sound. Philippe, who had risen by the Restoration, and who was misled by intense contempt for civilians, believed in the success of the new decrees, and would play for a rise; while Nucingen and du Tillet, who expected a Revolution, played against him for a fall. But the two shrewd partners affected to agree with Colonel the Comte de Brambourg, and seemed to share his convictions; they held out hopes of his doubling his millions, and arranged to win them from him. Philippe fought like a man to whom victory means four million francs. His zeal was so conspicuous that he was ordered to return to Saint-Cloud with the Duc de Maufrigneuse to sit in council. This mark of favor saved Philippe; for he wanted, on July 25th, to sweep the Boulevards with a charge of cavalry, and he would no doubt have fallen to a bullet from his friend Giroudeau, who commanded a body of the adversary.

Within a month nothing of his immense fortune remained to Colonel Bridau but his mansion, his estate, his pictures, and furniture. He was fool enough too, as he said, to believe in the re-establishment of the elder branch, to which he remained faithful till 1834. Then, on seeing Giroudeau a Colonel, Philippe, prompted by very intelligible jealousy, rejoined the service. In 1835 he, unfortunately, was appointed to the command of a regiment in Algiers, where for three years he was left in a post of danger, hoping to win his general's epaulets; but a malignant influence—that of General Giroudeau—left him where he was. Philippe, by this time grown hard, carried military severity to an extreme, and was detested in spite of his Murat-like bravery.

At the beginning of the fatal year 1839, while turning to

harry the Arabs in the course of a retreat before superior numbers, he rushed on the foe, supported by one company only. They fell upon a body of Arabs; the struggle was bloody, frightful, hand to hand, and very few of the French horse escaped. Seeing that their Colonel was surrounded, those who were at some little distance did not deem it wise to perish in a vain attempt to rescue him. They heard his shout, "Help! Your Colonel!—A Colonel of the Empire!" followed by fearful cries, but they got back to their regiment. Philippe died a horrible death, for they cut off his head, when he fell hacked almost to pieces by yataghans.

Joseph, who was married about this time by the good offices of the Comte de Sérizy to the daughter of an old millionnaire farmer, inherited the house and the estate of Brambourg, which his brother had been unable to sell, though he would gladly have deprived him of his inheritance. What gave the painter most pleasure was the fine collection of pictures. Joseph, whose father-in-law adds daily to his hoards, has already an income of sixty thousand francs. Though he paints splendid pictures, and is always doing services to his fellow-artists, he is not yet a member of the Institute. In consequence of a clause in the parchment of entail, he is now Comte de Brambourg, which often makes him burst out laughing among his friends in his studio.

"Fine birds make fine feathers," his friend Léon de Lora will then remark; for even now that he is famous as a landscape painter, he has not given up his old trick of perverting proverbs, and he told Joseph *à propos* of the modesty with which he accepted the favors of fortune, "Never mind. A feast is as good as enough."

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